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the Unpolitical German* FRITZ STERN
Interview: Richard Hofstadter
*Lives of the Historians, II:
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The Unity of the French Enlightenment•

Peter Gay

Our age is the twilight of historical clichés, in the study of the French Enlightenment as elsewhere. The comfortable generalities which welcomed us into the world of the eighteenth century have been riddled, one after the other, by revisionist scholarship. Kingsley Martin's survey of the *philosophes*' politics remains an engaging essay, but recent work has made it age rather badly. Carl Becker's sly witticisms continue to be amusing, but they irritate the historian who knows that the Enlightenment was very different from the thirteenth century. Even Ernst Cassirer's authoritative *Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, the most impressive synthesis we have, no longer satisfies us: we have learned that the *philosophes* were more various, more political, more deeply engaged with their world, than is suggested by Cassirer's stately procession of thinkers who all somehow prefigured Kant.

The historian facing the monographic literature feels like a traveler in a nightmarish landscape: there is no lack of signposts, but they point with malicious delight in opposite directions. The *philosophes* were not optimists: Voltaire

• This essay was originally read, in somewhat different form, at the seventy-fourth annual meeting of the American Historical Association in December 1959.

Denis Diderot (1713–1784). After the painting by Van Loo. (Bettmann Archive.)

proclaimed life to be a shipwreck and lamented the decline of taste in his century; Holbach insisted on the viciousness and Helvétius on the selfishness of the human animal; even Rousseau, the champion of a just Providence, defended his optimism in the most anxious and lugubrious of tones. Yet they were too active, too energetic, too deeply opposed to the Christian doctrine of man's depravity, to lapse into pessimism or pious resignation. The *philosophes* were not rationalists: Condillac, D'Alembert, and Voltaire attacked the rationalists' construction of metaphysical systems, and insisted on the limits of reason, the ignorance of humanity, and the futility of seeking certainty. Yet they despised and combated antirationalist theories of knowledge and dwelled admiringly on the achievements of scientific method. The *philosophes* battled for toleration and the humane treatment of the victims of society—their humanitarian activities survive the scrutiny of the most hard-headed critic. Yet in their personal lives they were often intolerant and inhumane: Voltaire hounded his literary and political adversaries; D'Alembert, the enemy of censorship, peevishly asked the censors to suppress the pamphlets of his critics. The *philosophes* prided themselves on their knowledge of science: Maupertuis brilliantly confirmed and Voltaire brilliantly popularized Newton's cosmology; Diderot anticipated many discoveries in psychology and biology; the *Encyclopédie* was a massive tribute to technology and the scientific method. Yet the alert reader detects undertones of philistine aversion to scientific speculation, sometimes in the heart of the scientific camp; as in Diderot's hostility to mathematics. Perhaps the safest generality about the *philosophes* (certainly the most popular) was that they were "cold" rationalists, contemptuous of the power of emotion, existing in an empty universe stripped of love and color, devoid of any passion but the sexual one. But for all its plausibility, this generality too dissolves under scrutiny. It would hold only if we disregarded the *philosophes*' defense of imagination, their pioneering analysis of passion, their bold creation of literary forms, and their almost unanimous infatuation with Richardson's sensibility. And we would have to rob



Eighteenth-century engraving of an animated discussion between Rousseau (left) and Voltaire. (*Bettmann Archive.*)

the French Enlightenment of Rousseau and Diderot by calling them pre-Romantics—a larcenous and unjust, although widely practiced proceeding.

I could go on listing divergences among the *philosophes*: deists against atheists, aristocrats against democrats, believers in free will against determinists. Close inspection even ruins the harmonious portrait of a friendly debate within the philosophic family—or clique, as frightened enemies called it. Voltaire collaborated with an *Encyclopédie* in which he never really believed and to whose chief editor he gave uneasy and uncomprehending respect; Diderot, in return, offered reluctant tributes of flattery to the literary dictator whom he admired and distrusted as a brilliant but unstable child; Rousseau, at first welcomed by all came to reject, and to be rejected, by all. The *philosophes* moved in a highly charged atmosphere in which quarrels were bitter, reconciliations fervent, conversations intense, interests sometimes exalted but often trivial; an energetic atmosphere in which, despite all distractions, everyone worked, all the time.

It is this almost obsessive dedication to work that provides us with our escape from nominalism. For the *philosophes*, work was pleasure, obligation, consolation, fulfillment. For obvious reasons I shall resist the temptation of saying that it was salvation.

Obviously, the environment in which work is performed

imposes tasks, suggests styles, draws limits, and is in turn transformed by work done. Now, the *philosophes'* environment (and I mean more than the censorship or the salons, I mean the total matrix of their experience, including their experience of themselves) defined the *philosophes'* task. Let me put their situation into a formula: as men of letters at home in a world that was losing its Christian vocation, the *philosophes* felt this critical loss as a deep problem and conquered it by reinterpreting and transforming their civilization. They made themselves into the spokesmen for a revolutionary age in search of an interpreter.

I.

The *philosophes* were men of letters. This is more than a phrase. It defines their vantage point, and eliminates the stale debate over their status as philosophers. As men of letters who took their craft seriously, they had a passionate attachment to the incessant labor which is one of the secrets of style. Their output was enormous, and they sent less to the printer than they threw away. They knew the pleasure of self-criticism, and the sweeter pleasure of criticizing others. Grimm corrected Diderot, Diderot corrected Voltaire, and Voltaire corrected everybody. Rousseau, far from tossing off his masterpieces in a fit of feverish inspiration, struggled with them for years; Voltaire rewrote untiringly, and treated first editions as drafts to be recast in the next printing; Diderot poured early versions of articles into his letters to Sophie Volland. While there is no single Enlightenment style, all *philosophes* had style.

This devotion to the art of writing gave the *philosophes* the strength that comes from membership in a dignified craft; it gave them, for all their quarrels, common interests and a common vision. No matter how varied their concerns, therefore, they were men with a single career. To attribute, say, two careers to Voltaire—the irresponsible *littérateur* before the Calas case, the grim reformer after—is to misunderstand the unity of his life. Of course, the *philosophes'* versatility opens them to the charge of dilettantism, and it is true that they sometimes tried to teach what they had not

learned—as writers will. But the range of their knowledge was extraordinary. Diderot translated works on medicine and ethics; wrote articles on crafts, industry, philosophy, theology, history, politics, classical and modern literature; rode editorial herd on a stable of willful encyclopedists; broke new paths in the bourgeois drama, dramatic and art criticism, the novel and the dialogue. Voltaire took an informed and passionate interest in all the countries of Europe and all the countries of the mind.

Yet the *philosophes* were never so deeply engaged in politics to neglect literature, and they were never so deeply engaged in literature to neglect the society in which they lived. While they were literary men, they were neither bohemians nor alienated artists. While their view of their world was critical, and especially in religion, disruptive, they knew and loved the world they wished to change. Rousseau in some moods rejected it altogether, and asked for man's total regeneration, but it is significant that his fellow *philosophes* treated him as a madman long before his clinical symptoms became obvious. When they denounced civilization, they did so urbanely.

II.

The *philosophes*, then, much as they wished to change it, were at home in their world. To divide the century into two sharply defined forces—subversive *philosophes* against the orthodox—may be convenient and dramatic, but it is also much too simple. There were moments of crisis when two parties crystallized and Catholics squared off against unbelievers, but subtler and more pervasive than hostility were the ties that bound the *philosophes* to their society. They edited respectable magazines, flattered royal mistresses, wrote unexceptionable entertainments, and held responsible posts.

Nor was their attachment to the existing order based solely on calculation: they shared with literate Christians a religious education, a love for the classics of Roman and French literature, and an affection for the pleasures of cultivated leisure. Seeking to distinguish themselves, they

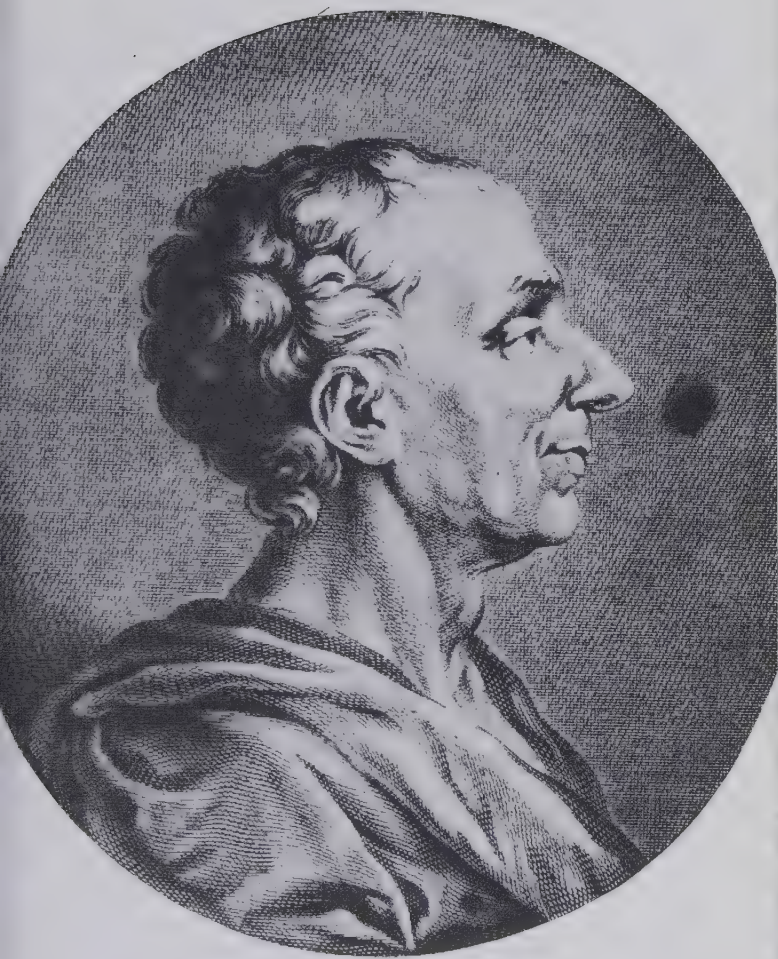
did not wish to abolish all distinctions. When they participated in politics, they often supported one orthodox party against another: Montesquieu the *parlements* against the king, Voltaire the king against the *parlements*. While they helped to prepare the way for the Jacobins, they were not Jacobins themselves.

Their attachment was strengthened by their association with a spectrum of would-be *philosophes*, half-*philosophes*, or Christians liberal enough to tolerate, or even to enjoy, men whose doctrines they rejected. Hangers-on who basked in borrowed glory or second-hand notoriety smuggled *philosophes'* letters, arranged for theatrical clagues, and offered true friendship in a quarrelsome world. Strategically placed officials stood between *philosophes* and the severities of the law, and good Christians who dabbled in higher criticism or polite anticlericalism spread philosophic doctrine in respectable circles. In a word, the *philosophes* were deeply embedded in the texture of their society.

Yet this did not prevent them from being at war with it at the same time. The *philosophes* never developed a coherent political program or even a consistent line of political tactics, but their polemics called for a France profoundly different from the country in which they lived—France after, not before, 1791. The regime could make concessions: boredom, a lost sense of purpose, could make many a bourgeois, priest, or aristocrat receptive to subversive propaganda. But aggressive deism or materialism, doctrines of the rule of law, complete toleration, and subordination of church to state—these tenets could not be assimilated by the old order. To neglect either side of their dual situation is to make the *philosophes* more revolutionary or more conservative than in fact they were.

III.

This tension which is yet not alienation places not only the *philosophes* in their century, it places the century itself. To say that the eighteenth century was an age of contradictions, is to say nothing: all ages have this characteristic in



Charles de Montesquieu (1689-1755). Contemporary engraving in the classical style. (*French Embassy.*)

common. We must be specific: eighteenth-century France was a Christian culture that was rapidly losing its Christian vocation without being fully aware of it.

"One day," writes Paul Hazard, "the French people, almost to a man, were thinking like Bossuet. The day after, they were thinking like Voltaire." This is doubly wrong. The *philosophes* had much opposition among the educated and the powerful. While the writings of Montesquieu and Voltaire and Diderot have survived, those of their adversaries have not, but survival is an unreliable guide to the intellectual map of the past: in the age of Louis XV Christianity had many a persuasive and intelligent defender. Moreover, we cannot properly speak of a "French people" in the eighteenth century. Most Frenchmen were wholly untouched by the Enlightenment and lived, as it were, in an earlier century. They believed in witches, applied spells, used home remedies long condemned by physicians, displayed a trust in authority long discarded by the educated, lived and died happily ignorant of the battles among Cartesians and Newtonians.

Yet for men sensitive or educated enough to be aware of intellectual currents, the eighteenth century was a time of turmoil. A whole complex of ideas and experiences, usually lumped together in the slippery word "secularization," came together in the reign of Louis XV to haunt thinking men. The literature of travel offered the spectacle of happy and civilized non-Christian cultures; the demands of international politics forged secular rather than sectarian alliances; the growth of the European economy stimulated the desire for worldly goods; the great discoveries of science suggested the appalling possibility of a universe without God.

Secularization did not mean the death of religion. Eight Frenchmen out of ten—perhaps nine—were uncontaminated by skepticism. Even the businessman or artisan, who greatly benefited from advances in technology, rarely allowed them to affect his faith. Still, what Troeltsch has called the "Church-directed civilization" was crumbling. Christians lived by the image of hierarchy: as God, his angels, and his



Rousseau in the country. (*Bettmann Archive.*)

creatures were arranged in an order of rank, so by analogy the skies, the family, law, society, the Church, were naturally hierarchical.

Now, as natural scientists demonstrated that the hierarchies of terrestrial and celestial motion, or the spheres of the heavens, were absurd, other revolutionaries were exposing the absurdity of other hierarchies.

In this time of trouble the two great hierarchical institutions, the church and the nobility, did little to counteract this exposure. It is easy to exaggerate the worldliness of the



Claude Adrien Helvétius (1715–1771). (*French Embassy.*)

eighteenth-century cleric or the uselessness of the eighteenth-century nobleman. Too much has been written about the atheist abbé and the idle marquis. There were many aristocrats who served their country ably, and rose above the interests of their order to advocate truly national policies. Yet as the history of eighteenth-century France demonstrates, the French aristocracy was on the whole unwilling to make the sacrifices necessary to integrate it into a state that demanded some centralization of power and some revision of the tax structure. Born in an age that had given it a social function, the aristocratic caste was losing its vocation, as embittered renegades like the Marquis D'Argenson did not fail to point out.

A similar loss of vocation threatened the Church. Thousands of priests fulfilled their offices with devotion; even some bishops believed in God. But in a time when natural philosophers were offering alternative explanations of the origins of man, the nature of evil, and the purpose of life, the Church needed a firmness of character, adroitness of policy, and above all a unity that it could not muster. Many a young man of talent went into the opposition, and used the dialectical skill and classical learning imparted by his priestly instructors for their destruction.

Still, for all the impiety of the age, religion survived, and one reason for the survival was that the famous war between science and theology did not take place in the simple form familiar to us from the Whig interpretation. The warfare began not between theology and science, but theology and some philosophical consequences drawn from science. It was not necessary to accept D'Alembert's positivism to be a good mathematician; or to be driven by Voltaire's anticlerical spleen to be a good Newtonian. Science, travel, politics, wealth, the great secularizing forces, did their work by indirection, as it were, behind the century's back.

Still they did their work, and they did it in the eighteenth century. In a celebrated book Paul Hazard has expended much learning to establish a crisis in the European conscience

before 1715. It is true that practically all the most aggressive ideas of eighteenth-century propagandists had a prehistory, but they did not touch a significant number of people until well after Newton's death in 1727. The typical seventeenth-century scientist was a good Christian: he was a Pascal, not a Hobbes. By separating theology from natural philosophy, or by ingeniously arguing that natural philosophy *supported* theology, seventeenth-century scientists concealed from themselves, as much as from others, the revolutionary implications of their work. It is a commonplace, but one all too often forgotten, that the geniuses from Galileo to Newton lived comfortably with convictions that eighteenth-century *philosophes* would stigmatize as incompatible. John Donne's famous and too much quoted lament that "new philosophy calls all in doubt," was the exceptional response of an exceptional man. In general, the imagination of the century was unaffected, or playfully expanded, by the new universe glimpsed in the new instruments. For Newton, God was active in the universe, occasionally correcting the irregularities of the solar system. The Newtonian heavens proclaimed God's glory.

This happy marriage of theism and science was not dissolved until the eighteenth century, when the discoveries of the age of genius were pushed to their logical conclusion. "Once the foundation of a revolution has been laid down," D'Alembert wrote in the *Encyclopédie*, "it is almost always in the next generation that the revolution is accomplished." Several brilliant French mathematicians, D'Alembert among them, generalized Newton's laws of gravitation far beyond Newton's wishes. By the last quarter of the century, Lagrange and Laplace had established, in elegant equations, the stability of the solar system. The goal of eighteenth-century science had become evident: Newton's physics without Newton's God.

IV.

The crisis of secularization, then, was slower and subtler than we have been led to believe. It was also more pervasive.

It was not confined to educated Christians, tormented by the startling conclusions of physicists. It was a problem for the *philosophes* themselves. It is not surprising that their anguish has received little attention—they covered it well with urbanity and noisy anticlericalism.

But anguish there was. The *philosophes* had two enemies: the institutions of Christianity and the idea of hierarchy. And they had two problems: God and the masses. Both the enemies and the problems were related and woven into the single task of rethinking their world. The old questions that Christianity had answered so fully for so many men and so many centuries, had to be asked anew: What, as Kant put it, What can I know? What ought I to do? What may I hope?

Science itself did not answer these questions. It only suggested—ever more insistently as the century went on—that the old answers were wrong. Now, the *philosophes* were products of Christian homes and Christian schools. If they became enemies of Christianity, they did so not from indifference or ignorance: they knew their Bible, their catechism, their Church Fathers, their apologetics. And they knew, because it had been drummed into them early, the fate that awaits heretics or atheists in the world to come. Their anticlerical humor therefore has the bitter intimacy of the family joke; to embrace materialism was an act of rejection.

The *philosophes'* crisis was a crisis of freedom. They did not fully understand it, but to the extent that they did understand it, they knew their situation to be filled with terror and delight. They felt the anxiety and exhilaration of the explorer who stands before the unknown.

To use such existentialist language may seem like rather a portentous way to describe men noted for their sociability and frivolity. It is of course true that the *philosophes* did not suffer alone: they had the comforting company of elegant salons and of respectable philosophical forebears.

Yet even the supple Voltaire, who had been initiated into unbelief by fashionable teachers, was not free from the symptoms of this crisis. Much of his mockery was a weapon

in a grim fight, and a device to keep up his own morale. Much of his philosophical rumination on free will reveals the persistence of a troublesome inner struggle.

It may not be fair to call to witness Rousseau, whose malaise was perpetual. But the shape of his agony mirrors the agony of his century. Nothing is more pathetic than Rousseau's attempt to rescue at least some comforting aspects of his universe from the icy blasts of Voltaire's cosmic pessimism. "All the subtleties of metaphysics," he

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) in Armenian costume. Painting attributed to Liotard. (*Bettmann Archive.*)



wrote Voltaire, seeking to answer the poem on the Lisbon earthquake, "will not make me doubt for a moment the immortality of the soul or a beneficent Providence. I feel it, I believe it, I want it, I hope for it, and I shall defend it to my last breath." But the edifice of Rousseau's faith was flimsily built on illogical hope: the immortality of the soul and a beneficent Providence are articles of faith to which a Christian happily subscribes, but to which the deist, nourished on scientific skepticism, has no right.

Diderot, the most ebullient of *philosophes*, the freest and most inventive of spirits, was driven from position to position and haunted by doubts. Born into a family richly endowed with priests, of pious parents and with a fanatical brother, long toying with entering the priesthood, Diderot moved from Catholicism to theism, from theism to deism, from deism to skepticism, and from skepticism to atheism. But atheism, with its cold determinism, repelled him even though he accepted it as true; while Catholicism, with its colorful ceremony, moved him even though he rejected it as false. Writing to his mistress, Sophie Volland, he cursed the philosophy—his own—that reduced their love to a blind encounter of atoms. "I am furious at being entangled in a confounded philosophy which my mind cannot refrain from approving and my heart from denying."

The materialists of course claimed to be defiantly happy at being cosmic orphans. But the question, If God is dead, what is permitted? was not a question calculated to make men sleep easy.

I am not simply arguing that the *philosophes* were less cheerful than they appeared in their social roles—most of us are. Nor that they suffered personal crises—philosophers, especially young philosophers, often do. I am arguing that the *philosophes'* anguish was related to the crisis in Christian civilization; that (to use different language) whatever childhood experiences made them psychologically vulnerable in adult life, their obsessions, their self-questionings, their anxieties, were poured into their religious, moral, and political speculation.



V.

But the *philosophes'* crisis was not only a crisis felt, it was also a crisis conquered. And this brings me back to the idea of work, and to the philosophy of energy.

There are several ways of dealing with a sense of helplessness. The *philosophes* might have given way to panic, despair, or paralyzing skepticism; they might have escaped from the terrifying spectacle of an empty universe by a doctrine of art for art's sake. Instead they overcame their anxiety by work. They escaped not from, but into reality.

The philosophy of energy was not a technical philosophical position, but a style of life. Whatever its form, it was confidence in the rational will, a humanist pride in man's possibilities tempered by an empiricist's humility before man's limitations. Men, Voltaire said, must dare to do more than they have done. "We do not want enough," he warned, and late in life he wrote to a friend, "We must battle nature and fortune until the last moment, and never despair of anything until we are good and dead."

Sometimes work was an escape. The drudgery of reading proofs on an *Encyclopédie* or of correcting a king's verses were bulwarks against uncertainty, loneliness, and *Weltschmerz*. "If I were by your side, I'd complain and you would comfort me; but you are absent, and work is the only means I have of diverting my thoughts from my sufferings." Thus Diderot, depressed and alone in Paris, to his best friend Grimm. "To work and think of you, that's my life." Thus Voltaire, after his disastrous stay at the Prussian court, to his niece and mistress Madame Denis. Love and work: an energetic program to make an unpalatable world less unpalatable.

But work as consolation is only the most primitive level of the philosophy of energy. Its most familiar expression, which pervaded the *philosophes'* writings through the century, was the drive to assert man's power over the environment. Even the materialists, for all their determinism, taught the virtue of rational activity and the possibility of modifying nature.

Power over nature was more than a cliché: the *philosophes* knew precisely what they meant by it. They had learned it, partly from Bacon, partly (although rather less) from Descartes, and above all from the needs and possibilities of their time. Medieval man had not abjectly resigned himself to misery or pathetic dependence on divine intervention in his behalf. Yet even sympathetic historians have conceded that the Middle Ages were an age of precarious and violent existence. Men aged young and died young; those fortunate enough to survive infancy, epidemics, or famines, were likely victims of bandits, pirates, sudden war, or brutal migrations. "Beneath all social life," Marc Bloch writes, "there was a soil of primitivism, of submission to ungovernable powers."

To remedy this—to prolong life, clear the roads of assassins, keep men from starving, and give them hope of enjoying the fruits of their labors—required more than a stable political organization. It required a spiritual revolution, and the culmination of that revolution was the philosophy of the *philosophes*.

But words alone did not eliminate illness, starvation, or insecurity, scourges that continued to haunt the world of Bacon and even the world of Voltaire. French civilization of the eighteenth century still wore a half-finished look. Polish was bright, because it was new; the decline of religious fervor did not prevent occasional terrifying outbursts of hysteria, the advances of education did not eliminate brutal games, sadistic sports, or cruel riots.

The survival of coarseness was related to the continuing ravages of diseases and the pressures of hunger: the uncertainty of life did not allow the generous grace of conduct that comes with true ease. The fate of the royal family—the death in rapid succession of the only son and two of the grandsons of Louis XIV—dramatically underlined the general precariousness. At the age of forty-six, Diderot, on a visit to his native town, found most of his schoolmates gone, and mused darkly on the brevity of life.

Yet the *philosophes'* attitude to the blows of fate was one

of defiance, not resignation. While deists continued to protest that the Lord gave, they saw no reason why they might not enjoy what he had given, and why they might not try to keep it as long as possible. In the Middle Ages, the accidents of nature had dominated man; in the eighteenth century, to use Diderot's phrase, men were seizing nature and tormenting her. Scientists were beginning to force from her reluctant lips the secrets of her operations.

Evidence for this sense of mastery is everywhere. It is in medicine, which had a place of honor among the *philosophes*. Some of them were physicians, others took an abiding interest in what La Mettrie, himself a doctor, praised as the supreme art of healing. It is, too, in Diderot's *Encyclopédie*. Its alphabetical arrangement vividly emphasizes its single-minded purpose. The anticlerical articles are not just playful bait to make the reader tolerate dull pieces on crafts; the articles on crafts are not just padding for daring heresies. Both fulfill one task: to reinterpret the world and by reinterpreting it, to change it. In a phrase which has become too familiar to have retained its original impact, Diderot said that he wanted his *Encyclopédie* to "change the general way of thinking."

The *philosophes*, men with a single career which took a variety of forms, also had a single task which took a variety of expressions. The philosophy of energy is the glass that collects all their activities in a single focus. Diderot spoke for them all: "Everything belongs together in the human understanding; the obscurity of one idea spreads over those that surround it. An error throws shadows over neighboring truths, and if it happens that there should be in society men interesting in forming, as it were, centers of shadow, soon the people will find itself plunged into a profound darkness." The spreading of light operates by the same Keynesian multiplier: the *philosophes'* propaganda campaign, from the bulky *Encyclopédie* to the sprightly *Dictionnaire philosophique*, is a series of lamps from which others will find illumination and spread the light in their turn.

The *philosophes'* task cannot therefore be contained in

the word "humanitarianism." It was greater than that: the campaign to abolish torture cannot be divorced from the campaign to abolish Jesuits or to spread technological knowledge—all are part of imposing man's rational will on the environment. Nor was it simply the acquisition of knowledge. As good Baconians, the *philosophes* preached that knowledge is power, but few of them were naïve enough to believe that knowledge automatically creates virtue: their writings are filled with warnings against the misuse of intelligence or the brutalizing of learning. They did argue that since knowledge is power, ignorance is impotence. It followed that the men who wanted to keep others in ignorance were enemies of humanity. What does one do with monsters who want to castrate mankind? All—or almost all—methods are fair against them.

The philosophers of energy face to face with their enemies: this confrontation leads us back to the beginning, for it helps to solve the puzzling contradictions that beset the interpreter of the Enlightenment. The French Enlightenment had its own history, and that history mirrors, and helped to shape, the history of the century. Something happened in Europe in the 1760's. It was the beginning of industrial society; the beginning of modern politics and the great democratic revolt against aristocratic regimes. It was a time of turmoil within the Christian world itself: witness the suppression of the Jesuits, and the outbursts of hysterical prosecutions of Huguenots and blasphemers.

In this time of trouble, the *philosophes* added to their sense of power over the environment a sense of mission. The moderate anticlericalism of a Montesquieu gave way to the belligerent cry, *Ecrasez l'infâme*; democratic political ideas found a favorable hearing even from the skeptic Voltaire. The *philosophes* grew more radical, more combative, more convinced than ever that they were the prophets of a new age that would rise on the ruins of the old.

As they became more violently partisan, the contradictions in their views became more obvious. As a historian, Voltaire delighted in the past for its own sake; as an



aesthete, Diderot delighted in the play of light and shade on canvas. But as prophets, both found it necessary to import moral lessons into all their writings. If the old civilization must give way to the new, if men must learn to dare and to rely on themselves, if even the uneducated are to find their place in this revolution, then *philosophes* must teach, and teach again, and teach everywhere. Cultivated men possessed by a sense of mission temper their cultivation for the sake of their mission. This will lead to inconsistencies. But these inconsistencies do not destroy, indeed they express, the richness and the unity of the French Enlightenment.

Portrait studies of Voltaire by Huber. (*Bettmann Archive.*)



The Case of the Missing Treaty Clause

Stanley Lichtenstein

The price exacted from the United States by Hassan Bashaw, the Dey of Algiers, for his signing of the 1797 Treaty of Tripoli included 40,000 royal duros (Spanish silver dollars), 13 watches, 5 seal rings, and 140 ells of cloth; also, the promised future delivery of 25 barrels of pitch, 4 anchors, and sundry other goods. It was rather like the purchase of Manhattan Island from the Indians, but on a grander scale. The United States hoped, by entering into the treaty, to put an end to piracy by the Barbary States against her vessels. The transaction was not completed until the American government made a further payment, on April 10, 1799, to the Dey equivalent to \$18,000.

In spite of the handsome compensation, Hassan Bashaw's retinue apparently did not handle the transaction in a businesslike manner. A bitter controversy arising in the United States nearly a century and a half after the signing of the treaty has demonstrated eloquently that the quality of the Dey's secretarial help left much to be desired. Of the twelve articles of the treaty as ratified by the United States Senate

on June 7, 1797, and proclaimed as law by President John Adams on June 10, one article—the eleventh, on “Religious Liberty”—was in some inexplicable way omitted from the Arabic text which had been “signed and sealed at Algiers, on the 4th day of Argil, 1211, corresponding with the 3d day of January, 1797. . . .”

President Adams and the members of the Senate had no knowledge of this, for they did not speak Arabic. When the President in his proclamation said that he had “seen the said Treaty” and did, “by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, accept, ratify and confirm the same, and every clause and article thereof,” he was referring to the text in English, including Article 11, which stated:

As the Government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion; as it has in itself no character of enmity, against the laws of religion, or tranquillity of Musselmen; and as the said States never have entered into any war or act of hostility against any Mehometan nation, it is declared by the parties that no pretext arising from religious opinions shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries.

President Adams concluded the proclamation with the words: “And I do hereby enjoin and require all persons bearing office civil or military within the United States, and all other citizens or inhabitants thereof, faithfully to observe and fulfill the said Treaty and every clause and article thereof.”

Before long the 1797 treaty was rendered academic by the fact that hostilities were again begun by Tripoli, in May 1801, after a year of threats. On June 4, 1805, another “Treaty of Peace and Amity” was signed in Tripoli. This treaty included a clause stating that the “Government of the United States has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion, or tranquility of Musselmen,” but not repeating the specific avowal of the 1797 clause that the “Government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion.”

For the next 125 years the Tripolitan treaties, including Article 11 of the 1797 English text, were routinely printed

in all official and unofficial U.S. treaty collections. Save for the "Religious Liberty" clause, all memory of the treaties would have faded from the public mind as the documents gathered dust. The revival of interest in the old treaties in our century clearly reflects the motives and the passions attending other contemporary controversies in the realm of church-state relations and religious liberty—such as the controversy over the Supreme Court's memorable opinion holding that:

The "establishment of religion" clause of the First Amendment means at least this: Neither a state nor the Federal Government can set up a church. Neither can pass laws which aid one religion, aid all religions, or prefer one religion over another. . . . (Everson school bus case of 1947, with the principle reasserted in the McCollum "released time" case of 1948.)

Americans who approve of the Supreme Court's Everson-McCollum interpretation tend to be undisturbed by Article 11 of the 1797 treaty with Tripoli; Americans who disapprove of that Supreme Court interpretation tend to look upon Article 11 of the treaty as an abomination which must be expunged from the historical record at all costs. Zealots in both camps, determined to have "history" on their side, have resorted to flag-waving and distortion of facts. For instance, some publications of atheistic or freethinking outlook have quoted the first clause of Article 11 of the 1797 treaty as an utterance of George Washington, rather than as a clause in a treaty negotiated during Washington's administration but signed during Adams's; by this means they have sought to sanctify the words as emanating from the President who was "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen." On the other hand, advocates of the view that the United States is, or ought to be, a "Christian nation" in a legal or quasi-legal sense, have gone beyond refutation of the misleading "quotation" from Washington and taken the position that Article 11 of the 1797 treaty was "fictitious," and never a part of the treaty at all.

This contention is based on an "Annotated Translation of 1930" included in *Treaties and Other International Acts*

of the *United States of America*, V. II, edited by Hunter Miller (United States Government Printing Office, 1931) in which the translator, Dr. C. Snouck Hurgronje of Leiden states:

The eleventh article of the Barlow (1797) translation has no equivalent whatever in the Arabic. The Arabic text opposite that article is a letter from Hassan Pasha of Algiers to Yussuf Pasha of Tripoli. The letter gives notice of the treaty of peace concluded with the Americans and recommends its observation. Three-fourths of the letter consists of an introduction, drawn up by a stupid secretary who just knew a certain number of bombastic words and expressions occurring in solemn documents, but entirely failed to catch their real meaning. Here the only thing to be done by a translator is to try to give the reader an impression of the nonsensical original. . . .

In this connection, the editor, Hunter Miller, observes:

. . . Most extraordinary (and wholly unexplained) is the fact that Article 11 of the Barlow translation, with its famous phrase, "the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion," does not exist at all. There is no Article 11. The Arabic text which is between Articles 10 and 12 is in form a letter, crude and flamboyant and withal quite unimportant, from the Dey of Algiers to the Pasha of Tripoli. How that script came to be written and to be regarded, as in the Barlow translation, as Article 11 of the treaty as there written, is a mystery and seemingly must remain so. Nothing in the diplomatic correspondence of the time throws any light whatever on the point.

But Hunter Miller's position is itself fraught with "extraordinary" difficulties. There is the difficulty of accepting as part of the "real" treaty an "Article 11" consisting of a "crude and flamboyant" letter and bombastic nonsense inserted by a "stupid secretary," obviously having no proper place or meaning in a treaty at all. There is the difficulty of rejecting as "fictitious" the English text, which represents the treaty as read, ratified, and proclaimed by the President and the Senate, and insisting that the only "authentic" text is the admittedly defective one which was written in a language they could not understand. Most "extraordinary" of all, there is the difficulty of branding as fraudulent the

work of a contemporary translator who was on the scene at Algiers when the treaty was signed—and who was, in fact, the representative of the United States in the negotiations which made the treaty possible. This was Joel Barlow, U.S. consul general, who affixed to the draft treaty “the seal of the Consulate of the United States, at Algiers, this 4th day of January, 1797.” On parallel pages of the document conveyed to the United States for ratification were the Arabic text and, alongside, a text which Barlow certified to be “a literal translation of the writing in Arabic on the opposite page.”

Whatever one may think of the philosophy of church-state separation expressed in Article 11 of the Barlow version, its language was coherent and its contents formed a relevant part of the treaty as a whole—unlike the “crude and flamboyant” letter of the Dey of Algiers to the Pasha of Tripoli and the “bombastic” material of the “stupid” secretary which somehow found their way into the Arabic text. Barlow—who in the course of a distinguished career was a soldier, lawyer, clergyman, merchant, poet, politician, and diplomat (including service as minister to France)—was a friend of Thomas Jefferson and in correspondence with Jefferson at the time the Tripolitan treaty was being drawn up. The views of the two men on the proper relations between church and state were in harmony, and the words of Article 11 of the Tripolitan treaty were Jeffersonian in spirit. There seems little point in attempting to dismiss Barlow with deprecatory labels like “bureaucrat” and “radical,” as some champions of the “Christian-nation” concept have done.

The mystery of the missing treaty clause has been further compounded by a document called “the Cathcart copy” of an Arabic text of the treaty—after James Leander Cathcart, who became consul at Tripoli on April 5, 1799, nearly two and a half years after the treaty in question had been concluded—and an Italian translation of the treaty on which Cathcart noted that the Barlow translation had been “ex-

tremely erroneous." Cathcart himself had had no part in the negotiations for the 1797 treaty, and did not know Arabic; his opinion that the Barlow version was "erroneous" came to him second-hand from an unknown translator into the Italian. The weight of such "evidence" would appear to be slight, except to persons bent on leaping from an unwarranted assumption (that Barlow had misrepresented the understanding he had negotiated with the Dey, and was an incompetent translator) to a foregone conclusion (that Article 11 of his translation was a pure fabrication, existing only in his own imagination).

In the discussion of the past decade a second mystery has arisen, which may appropriately be dubbed "The Case of the Missing Magazine Article." Writing in the correspondence columns of *America* (November 11, 1950), a critic of the Barlow version stated: "In an article in the *American Historical Review* for July, 1939, Barlow's paraphrase of the original treaty is described as 'erroneous.' Regarding the famous Article XI and the statement whose authenticity I am contesting, the article says it is 'historically accepted, widely cited, but grossly mistranslated. . . .' (p. 768)." But no such article appeared in the *American Historical Review* for July 1939, on p. 768 or any other page. Inquiries from this writer to Dr. Guy Stanton Ford, then managing editor of the *American Historical Review*, and Professor Samuel F. Bemis, Yale University diplomatic historian, elicited no further light as to when and where the missing scholarly article might have appeared—if, indeed, it had appeared at all. (The writer who cited this elusive article also erroneously asserted that the "treaty was written in the Turkish language . . .," but what he lacked in accuracy he made up for in zeal.)

In considering the case of the missing treaty clause, one's conclusions are apt to be influenced not only by predilections for or against the principle of separation of church and state, but also by the philosophy of language or the linguistic theory to which one adheres. The reader may, for instance, find it instructive to try to choose between Dr. C.

Snouck Hurgronje's (1930) translation of Article 3 of the 1797 treaty and Joel Barlow's, on the basis of the relative meaningfulness of the English used by each:

HURGRONJE VERSION [all following interpolations are those of Dr. Hurgronje]: Glory be to God! Declaration of the third article. We have agreed that if American Christians are traveling with a nation that is at war with the well-preserved Tripoli, and he [evidently the Tripolitan] takes [prisoners] from the Christian enemies and from the American Christians with whom we are at peace [the Arabic sentence is here most confused], then he sets him [*sic*] free, neither he nor his goods shall be taken. Likewise, the Americans, when they take [literally "bring"] ships of their enemies and there are on board people from Tripoli, they shall not take one of them nor their goods. Thus! [This word, occurring at the end of several articles, seems to take the place of a full stop.]

BARLOW VERSION: Article 3. If any citizens, subjects or effects belonging to either party shall be found on board a prize vessel taken from an enemy by the other party, such citizens or subjects shall be at liberty, and the effects restored to the owners.

In his discussion of James Leander Cathcart's notation regarding the "erroneous" character of the Barlow translation, Hunter Miller observes that "the Italian translation . . . on which that endorsement appears, presents its own linguistic difficulties, largely owing to its literal rendering and its consequent non-literary character as Italian. . . ." Similarly, it can justly be said that the Hurgronje translation into English "presents its own linguistic difficulties, largely owing to its literal rendering and its consequent non-literary character as English." Such a translation, if it had been made in 1797, could hardly have been submitted to the President and Senate of the United States, who would not have appreciated the translator's insistence on giving the reader "an impression of the nonsensical original." The translation which the government of the United States received from Joel Barlow was not nonsensical; its twelve articles were clear, concise, and relevant, and the article on religious liberty expressed a doctrine formulated by Roger Williams and championed in Barlow's day by Jefferson and Madison—the doctrine that the government has no competence in matters of religion and must preserve a strict

neutrality toward persons of all faiths and of none. President Adams and the members of the Senate, who ratified and proclaimed the Barlow treaty, were not shocked by this doctrine—already embodied in the First Amendment to the Constitution. Though it may have been dropped from an old treaty-text in the Arabic language, it cannot so easily be removed from the pages of American history.

Boulanger:

The Original Man on Horseback

Michael Curtis

At the beginning of 1886, Georges Clemenceau was demanding as the price of his support for the incoming Freycinet government inclusion in it of General Georges Ernest Jean Marie Boulanger as Minister of War.

Up to this time Boulanger had had a fortunate, successful, and honorable if unspectacular career. Born at Rennes in 1837 of a staunch republican family, he had been Clemenceau's senior in the lycée at Nantes before entering the military school of Saint-Cyr. After service in campaigns in Algeria, Italy, and Cochin China, where he had been wounded in the thigh by a lance, he had received a bullet wound in the shoulder in the siege of Paris in 1870. While leading the Versailles troops against the Commune in 1871 he had received another bullet in the left elbow. The physical effect of the wound was slight: its political effect was to be important. Boulanger was forced to retire from the battle and thus escaped any blame for the suppression of the Commune. His honorable conduct had gained him the rank of lieutenant colonel and the distinction of a commander of the Legion of Honor.



Boulanger continued to rise and, after some self-solicitation, became a brigadier general in 1880, at the age of 43. Already he had represented France, somewhat unwillingly, at the Yorktown centenary celebration, and had made himself noticeable by his refusal to board an American ship that carried a German flag.

It was known that he was militarily ambitious, and not everyone was happy about him even at this time. Léon Gambetta, who disliked him, had pointed out that "he has two eyes and yet he never looks anybody in the face."

The emerging general-politician seemed an attractive personality. Handsome with his close-cropped hair, blue eyes, sunburned color, fine head, blond mustache, and chestnut-colored imperial beard (fashionable in the army until about 1895), he had the erect and distinguished bearing of a soldier. Yet he also seemed to have all the gifts of the successful politician: the memory for names of people casually met on one occasion, the ready smile, the outstretched hand, the seemingly sincere warm welcome.

The new Minister of War was largely unknown to both the political world and the public. This deficiency he immediately attempted to remedy. If he had any talent at all, it was for personal publicity. He organized a press bureau and an efficient system of public relations, in which the distribution of three million photographs of himself in one year was only one of its many functions, and accepted all invitations to appear or speak at ceremonial functions. Rapidly an image was being created, a form, a myth. Commerce was eager to foster the development of this myth. Anticipating the public mood and sanctioned by Boulanger himself, a company was formed to cast 45,000 large metal busts of the general to be sold to all municipalities, schools, and other official organizations on his becoming ruler of France. Food, liquor, toys, gew-gaws, household goods, pipes, all began appearing with the name "Boulanger" attached to them. The name became the most magical symbol in the history of advertising.

A protégé of the Radicals and in particular of Clemenceau, the energetic Boulanger was displaying an unsus-

pected political ambition. Clemenceau, who had spurred Boulanger's promotion, had obtained for him a command in Tunis—where he had rebelled against the civil authorities—had suggested his visit to Yorktown, and had forced his appointment as Minister on Freycinet so that he could bring the army over to the Republic. The ladder by which Boulanger had risen was being kicked down.

Boulanger's first great public triumph was the Longchamp parade at the celebration of Bastille Day in 1886. On his expensive, beautiful black charger Tunis, which had formerly belonged to the drummer of the Horse Guards at St. Petersburg, he was the center of attention. The eyes of the crowd, as well as those of the marching soldiers, were fixed on him rather than on the colorless President. Carnot was being outshone by Boulanger as Grévy had been by Gambetta.

Even the official anthem played for the first time on this occasion was his responsibility. It was Boulanger who a few months earlier had set up the committee, including Thomas, Massenet, and Delibes, which had agreed on the authoritative melody of the "*Marseillaise*," declared to be the national anthem in 1879. At last France had someone to compete with the flamboyant, adventurous, youthful Emperor of Germany who, with his infantile delight in his numerous uniforms and costumes, his carefully cultivated mustache, his wide range of interests from art and sport to military affairs, was dominating the European political stage.

Chance had chosen Boulanger and fortune favored him. When the popular music-hall comedian Paulus was deciding on a new song, his lyric writer offered him three different versions:

Moi, j'faisais qu'admirer
Not' brav' Commandant Dominé

Moi, j'faisais qu'acclamer
Not' brav' Général Négrier

Moi, j'faisais qu'admirer
Not' brav' Général Boulanger

Paulus, somewhat indifferently but sensing the mood of his public, chose the last version. Two of the three officers have disappeared into obscurity: Goncourt was soon asking himself in his journal, "if Boulanger will play the part of Bonaparte, will it not be largely due to the song of Paulus?"

As Minister of War, Boulanger was acquiring the reputation of an energetic reformer and a competent administrator, endearing himself to the ordinary soldier, to republicans and to nationalists alike. He revised army rules to permit the wearing of beards, improved the quality of army food, allowed more leave of absence, provided beds as a substitute for the floor, allowed Sunday to be a free day, introduced the practice of welcoming new conscripts with music, and reduced the period of military service from five to three years. Boulanger attempted to make the army popular.

He had refused to support the monarchical opinions of the officers of Tours and dismissed the most extreme of them. In the Decazeville strike, he had given the coal miners hope by declaring that "if it is necessary, every soldier will share his soup and bread ration with a miner."

To the delight of the nationalists he had increased the production of powder, had introduced the Lebel rifle, and was encouraging the building of defenses along the eastern frontier. He was also bribing employees of foreign powers in order to obtain a list of spies employed in France, and was secretly though substantially subsidizing German socialist newspapers, which were critical of Bismarck.

The German statesman had once said: "You who know French history will agree with me that France's decisions are determined in difficult moments by energetic minorities." Boulanger was attempting to lead such a minority in fostering the sentiment of chauvinism and the heightening of militancy. The movement for *la revanche*, the desire to regain the two lost provinces, which had gained its impetus and mystique from Gambetta and was being guided by Mme Adam and Paul Déroulède, had now found a focal point for expression. A journal *Revanche* suddenly appeared and sold 130,000 copies of its first issue. Not even

the police could trace the source of the journal's backing. A chauvinist pamphlet, *Avant la bataille*, the publication of which Boulanger had approved, was being exhibited as a warning in every German bookstall.

Though the chauvinism was mainly focused on the opposition to Germany, it was equally applicable to other countries. Anglo-French relations were not sufficiently harmonious to dispel all anxiety, and there were many who approved the rumors that Boulanger would order the British out of Egypt.

But aggressive nationalism and chauvinism was a dangerous game for France to play, for both its manpower and production problems were serious. Between 1880 and 1890 its population was to increase by less than one million to thirty-eight million; that of Germany increased by four million, to forty-nine million. France's number of men of fighting age was only two thirds that of Germany, and the proportion was yearly growing more unfavorable. In 1880 its coal production was only one third that of Germany, its production of steel ingots about the same, and that of pig iron less than half.

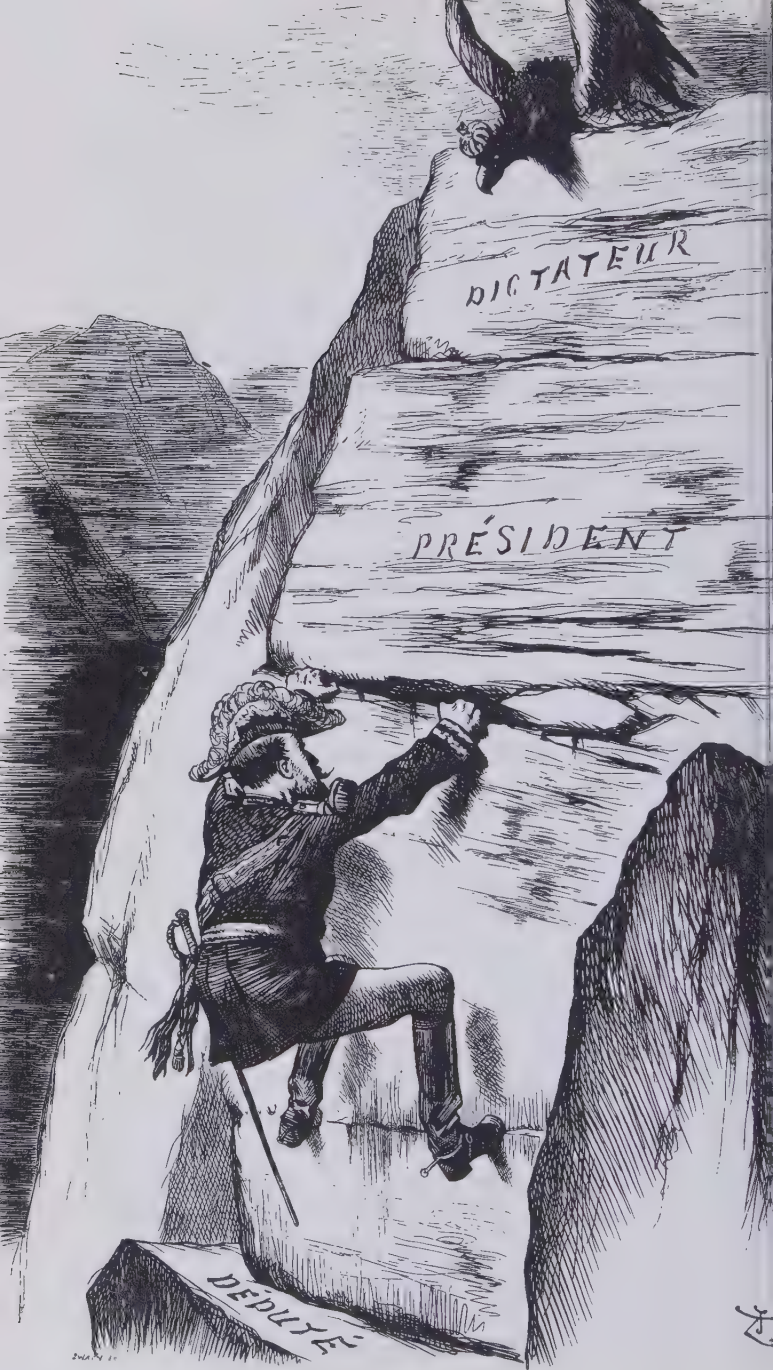
Boulanger had forgotten the warning of Gambetta on the German problem: "Think of it always, speak of it never. Relations with Germany were rapidly becoming strained when the Schnaebalé incident occurred on April 21, 1887. Schnaebalé, a French frontier police official of Alsatian birth, had met his German equivalent at the frontier to discuss business when he was seized by German police and taken to Metz. After careful diplomatic negotiations by President Grévy, Prime Minister Goblet, and Foreign Minister Flourens, the matter was speedily settled with the release of Schnaebalé.

In contrast to this peaceful procedure, Boulanger had adopted a belligerent attitude. Unknown then and revealed only three years later was the fact that he had spent considerable amount of secret service money at the time of the incident and had been preparing to send 50,000 troops to the frontier. In the eyes of the French populace

was Boulanger who "madé Bismarck draw back." The myth of the conquering hero grew. They refused to see that Bismarck had been strengthened by this very belligerency: "I could not invent Boulanger, but he happened very conveniently for me."

Yet however popular Boulanger was with the French masses, disenchantment had already set in for the few over the incident of the Duc d'Aumale. The Republic was proving exceedingly attractive to foreign royalty. Living a life of exile in the hotels of the rue de Rivoli and the Place Vendôme were Isabella of Spain, Francis II of Naples, and King Milan of Serbia. Among the more frequent visitors were Leopold of Belgium, George of Greece, a host of Russian grand dukes, and, of course, the Prince of Wales, whose French was fluent though he spoke English with a German accent. The Prince had made the resort of Biarritz fashionable, and a number of ladies celebrated. Every fashionable gentleman copied his style and behavior, even to the unbuttoning of the last button of the waistcoat, as well as his general attitude to the art and the pleasures of life. The English heir was an even more important leader of fashion than the Prince de Sagan who, by his obsession for appearing at all social occasions—the opera, the race track, fashionable restaurants and exhibitions—was rapidly running through his wife's fortune and heirlooms.

But France was not equally kind to its own royalty. On May 15, 1886, the Comte de Paris, on the occasion of the marriage of his daughter to the heir to the Portuguese throne, had been indiscreet enough to invite foreign ambassadors to the elegant and extravagant reception. The combination of a large crowd outside and of the pretenders to the throne inside the house produced a demonstration strong enough to show that enthusiasm for the monarchy had not entirely disappeared. The regime acted on the familiar French maxim: "Those who are absent are always in the wrong." The direct descendants of former rulers were exiled from France on June 23, 1886, the Comte de Paris being followed to his steamer at Tréport by the weeping faithful



L'AUDACE!!

who guessed they would never see him return as Philip VII.

The popular Duc d'Aumale, the son of Louis-Philippe, was struck off the army list by Boulanger, who attacked him "as a man who at 21, knowing little or nothing, became a general because he was the son of a king." Boulanger's action was approved by the Chamber in spite of the current gossip that its real cause was the success of the duke in gaining the favors of an actress of the Comédie-Française, in which Boulanger, equally interested, had been unsuccessful. The duke was not prepared to make the same arrangements regarding this particular lady that he had previously by sharing Léonide Leblanc with Clemenceau.

When the duke protested to President Grévy that the decree was a violation of the Charter of the Army, Boulanger called the letter "insolent," and the duke was expelled from the country. It was no consolation to the duke, who had made pipe smoking so popular in France, that he could now get his tobacco cheaper in London.

A Belgian newspaper immediately published a letter that Boulanger had written to the duke. Though Boulanger denied having written either version, the letter in slightly varied, but more disagreeable, form was published by Royalist papers in Paris. "It is you," Boulanger had said to D'Aumale, "who proposed me for General: it is to you that I owe my nomination. I shall always be proud of having served under such a chief as you, and blessed would be the day which would recall me under your orders." Gratitude has rarely taken such rancorous form.

Yet the popularity of Boulanger was increasing. When Goblet formed his government in December 1886—the Freycinet government without Freycinet—he was forced to retain Boulanger. When Rouvier formed his government in May 1887, over 12,000 letters were written demanding that Boulanger be kept. In Paris, 38,000 electors voted for him though he was neither a candidate, nor legally eligible as an army officer. Every day Rochefort was writing articles and publishing letters arguing for the retention of Boulanger. Biographies of him were issued, and serious and humorous

magazines devoted articles to him. Naquet was urging him to attempt a coup d'état. Fearing a demonstration on July 14, 1887, the government reinforced the Parisian garrison: the troops along the President's route had their arms loaded and the new Minister of War, General Ferron, had orders to act peremptorily if any disorder arose.

Meanwhile the government was distressed at the street demonstrations in support of Boulanger, and the crying at improvised meetings of the slogan

C'est Boulanger, lange, lange,
C'est Boulanger qu'il nous faut!

It was uncertain whether the police and the army were completely reliable.

Deciding to get him out of Paris at all costs, the government appointed Boulanger commander of the 13th Army Corps at Clermont-Ferrand. When he left Paris on July 8, 1887, an enormous crowd assembled at the Gare de Lyon in an attempt to prevent his train from moving. Climbing on the engine, singing songs and shouting its support, the crowd delayed his departure for two hours. Clemenceau was now aware of the monster he had created: Boulanger was now "the negation of the republican doctrine" and it was unwise for republicans to exalt an individual to such a point.

The inexplicable had occurred. An individual who had not yet shown himself to be either a great general nor more than an average competent civil administrator, who could point to no past victories or glories, no great reforms to plead, no magical name to use, had captured the imagination of a large part of the country, and instilled fear in the regime.

Max Weber suggested that there are three qualities decisive for a politician: passion or a sense of vocation, a feeling of responsibility, and a sense of proportion. Boulanger was singularly deficient in all three. Fundamentally he was the ultimate political vacuum, the man without a single sincere conviction or principle. "Give me a button,"

Napoleon had said, "and I will make men die for it." Boulanger was emulating him with a red carnation.

Flexible to a degree seldom known in political history, he was astute enough to take advantage of all the prevailing discontent and to offer solace to all. Since promises were meaningless, he could offer an era of prosperity, glory, and deliverance in return for support. But support for what? Boulanger himself neither knew nor cared to elaborate. He had the character of a romantic adventurer in the clothes of a disciplined soldier. He could repeat with Cromwell: "A man never goes so far as when he does not know where he is going." The slogan would become the means to power and its own justification. The career would be distinguished by its capacity for intrigue rather than for highmindedness. The man suffered from too much ambition, but was equally lacking in strength of purpose or self-will, in energy as in principle.

Indeed the Boulanger affair is interesting more for what the public made of him than because of Boulanger himself. Sheer mediocrity was being made significant. For two years Boulanger stole the mantle which had formerly draped the princes collectively, playing the pretender and being addressed by aspiring courtiers as "Sire." Countesses competed with each other for the honor of his company. Surrounded by satellites and a few honest men, plentifully supplied with money, subsidizing scurrilous papers, Boulanger was the focal point of a manifestation of that mass hysteria that occasionally engulfs a whole nation.

In Clermont-Ferrand the effect of Boulanger's personality was dynamic and contagious. When his army corps engaged in autumn maneuvers, the opposing troops rushed headlong at each other. Boulanger advised the infantry: "Never wait to be attacked: always assume a vigorous offensive." To the cavalry he suggested: "You can never be too bold. Be headstrong, be rash." His military suggestions paralleled his political activity: "Find out where your enemy is, and then go for him."

During the Wilson affair, Boulanger began the series of



Portrait photograph of General Boulanger during his bid for power. (*Bettmann Archive.*)

intrigues and political machinations which was to continue until the end of his career. During the "Historic Nights" of November 27-28, 1887, Boulanger had met the Comte de Martimprey, Baron de Mackau and the Marquis de Beauvoir, friends and representatives of the Comte de Paris. The General was promised any titles and honors he chose in return for his help in the restoration of the monarchy. So novel was this development that when the representatives reported back to the Orléanist pretender in vague terms, he thought "the general officer who favored the restoration of the monarchy" was Galliffet, not Boulanger.

A month later, on January 2, 1888, Boulanger paid his strange visit, arranged by Georges Thiébaud, to the Bonapartist claimant. Though Boulanger was disguised and thought to hide himself as "Commandant Solar," he was followed by the ever-present detectives from Clermont-Ferrand to Lyon, where they lost him. Flamboyantly carrying a stick with a silver top on which his name was engraved, he slipped across the border to meet the pretender at his exile in Prangins. Noticing the sword that Napoleon had worn at Marengo and expressing admiration for it, Boulanger received from the prince the promise that "on the day you have restored Alsace-Lorraine to France, that sword shall be yours." Perhaps this was in compensation for the prince's ambiguous remark: "I do not say I shall present myself as candidate at a plebiscite, but neither do I say I shall not."

From these two royalist groups, the Orléanists and the Bonapartists, Boulanger could acquire the support of a number of adventurers and of their journals: from the Legitimists, through Arthur Meyer, he obtained financial backing. Meyer, born a German Jew, was a familiar social figure. A prominent theatrical journalist whose intimate associations with the theater had extended to leading ladies as well as productions, he had had a chequered political and personal career. Accustomed to mixing with the Bonapartists during the Empire, he had lost a fortune in speculation and had seen his future fortune in the aspiring Legitimists. Director of the Royalist journal *Le Gaullois*, he had left for a time to establish a waxworks, the Musée Grévin, but had returned to the paper. Meyer tried to persuade the Royalists that "Boulanger was the best arm forged against parliamentarism. Take it," he suggested, "and do not look at the sleeve."

For Boulanger he was providential, for Meyer was a close friend of the Duchesse d'Uzès, great-granddaughter and heiress of the Veuve Cliquot. The house of Uzès was one of the oldest in France, regarding itself as the first. In the reign of Louis XIII, after the King had ordered that titles be

proved, the coaches of the various dukes had hurried to comply with the demand. The coachman of the Duc d'Uzès had overturned all rivals in his path, ensuring the first arrival of his master, and thus his claim to be the premier duke. The present duchess, still in part retirement since being left a widow at the age of thirty, was a hostess and poetess, and ambitious to serve her prince. Played on by Meyer, the duchess, whose intellectual discipline was not as severe as the high black dresses she wore, contributed heavily to the Boulangist cause. Her mind was limited by nature as well as by background. When she gave a dinner party of twenty-four to which all the leading Royalists were invited, the menu was printed with Boulangist slogans taking the place of the more accepted name of dishes.

Each group thought it was using Boulanger for its own ends: for Boulanger, self-deception may have gone even further than conscious deceit of others. Even now he was still hoping to return as a republican minister of war, and he had kept his lines open to Freycinet, Goblet, and Floquet in the hope that any of them might call on him.

The former republican hero and standard-bearer was now the focal point for all anti-republican activity. To the left he was another embodiment of the generals of the Committee of Public Safety: to the right he was the battering-ram to destroy the regime. Boulangism was becoming a complex phenomenon, on the meaning of which no two people could agree. Among his supporters were Bonapartists like Thiébaud and Millevoye; Royalists like Dillon and Meyer; Nationalists like Déroulède, who brought both his conscience and his strong-arm men, the League of Patriots—and the young Maurice Barrès, who at that time acquired both a life-long taste and distaste for political activity; pure adventurers like Rochefort and Laguerre; anarchists like Louise Michel; and there were soon to come anti-Semites and clericals. In addition, a group of ambitious politicians hitched themselves to the Boulangist star.

All were interested in Boulangism rather than in Boulanger: in opposition to the regime rather than any loyalty

to Boulanger. Lewis Namier has suggested that the essence of political mass movements is shrouded in darkness. Certainly behind the intense brilliance with which the political spotlight shone on the leading figures there was an ultimate void. Ferry's dismissal of the leading character as only "a café-concert Saint-Arnaud," a phrase over which a duel was almost fought, was exactly true.

A significant part of the press was collaborating with the movement—while the Opportunist papers were continually hostile, those of the Radicals and of the Royalists were divided, and those of the Bonapartists were wholly favorable. Perhaps it was not a coincidental factor that the Boulangist papers considerably increased their circulation.

On February 26, 1888, the government was made painfully aware of the activity that had been performed on



Contemporary cartoon of Boulanger. (Bettmann Archive.)

Boulanger's behalf by secret committees. Though technically ineligible as a military officer, though he had not made a single speech or address, though he was not even a candidate, Boulanger received votes in every one of seven by-elections, 55,000 votes in all, nearly all from rural areas. No one could adequately interpret this phenomenon. Were these voters relatives of the conscripts for whom Boulanger had made life easier, or Frenchmen eager for war, or those attracted to dictatorship? In the lobbies of the Chamber, Boulanger was the constant topic of conversation. The republicans, bewildered, were aware it was necessary "to close the era of revolutions."

A month later, Boulanger was dismissed from his army command for having left his post in Clermont-Ferrand without permission. On three occasions, he had visited Paris, believing that dark glasses and a limp were sufficient disguise. Not only was the government aware of this; it also knew of every telegram he had sent. For a week he was left in the ambiguous position of being in the army and yet not being able to wear uniform. But on March 26, after a ten-minute appearance before an army court-martial, he was found guilty of insubordination and of having left his post before a successor had been appointed, and placed on the retired list. Too late the implications of this were realized. Being a civilian he could now run for political office, while he retained both his title and his right to wear the uniform.

Commercial enterprise and religion in their different ways were preoccupied with the Boulangist problem. Six hundred people were willing to pay one half franc each to attend a meeting protesting Boulanger's dismissal, only to find that the promoters had quietly stolen away with the money. A prophet from England appeared on the scene to announce that Divine Providence was at work. If the letters of the word "Boulanger" were given their numerical value in Greek, they would make 666. It was clear that the General would play a leading part between now and the Second Advent, fixed precisely for 3 p.m. on March 5.

Boulanger treated the situation equally seriously. When

he had left his post, he had hurried to Paris to meet with a group of nineteen supporters, who formed a National Protest Committee, the nucleus of an advisory, intelligence, and campaign group. The movement now had its symbol, the carnation, the favorite flower of Boulanger. It had its ebullient pamphleteer, Henri Rochefort, editor of *L'Intransigeant* and deputy for the Seine since 1885. An aristocrat who detested people, he had made a career out of his extreme left-wing views. It had its brain in Naquet, a fifty-five-year-old hunchback, scientifically trained, interested in social reform, and author of the divorce law. It had its parliamentary mouthpiece in the fiery adventurer Laguerre, at thirty-two a brilliant orator and well-known lawyer, equally devoted to love of intrigue and the intrigue of love. It had its first provider in Count Dillon, a large man with common features, former military school friend of Boulanger, and head of a commercial cable company. He had thrown eight million francs on the waters of Boulangism and was prepared to throw even more in the hope of a much larger return. It had its generator in Thiébaud, the illegitimate son of the Comtesse de Montesquiou-Fezensac, the journalist who called himself the inventor of Boulangism.

The work of the Committee was successful. On March 25, on the first ballot, he obtained 45,000 votes in the Laon election, a substantial plurality though not the necessary absolute majority; he would not contest the second ballot, he declared, but would stand for the Nord on April 15. On April 8, he received votes in three constituencies, in one winning a clear majority of 20,000 votes over all opponents, and in all receiving substantial support even though he was not a candidate and the electors had to write in his name.

Boulanger, self-confident and exultant, was interested only in the Nord, the most heavily industrialized section of the country. Though he never visited the electoral area, he won a resounding majority of 96,000. On his way to the Chamber the next week he was escorted by a large enthusiastic crowd. Had he urged it on, it is likely that it might have stormed the Chamber. Boulanger had concentrated on

attacking Parliament "the sterility and impotence of which will result in the French Republic being the laughing-stock of Europe." France, its dignity, its future, was in danger. There was only one remedy, dissolution of the Chamber and revision of the Constitution. Boulanger was the new broom to sweep out the cobwebs of parliamentarianism.

No one was sure what this meant or implied. Perhaps his short visit to the United States had left him with an admiration for the office of President, and given him the idea of a complete separation of the executive from the legislature, making it a stronger and more independent office. Whatever it meant for Boulanger, revision for the Bonapartists meant rule by one man, for the Royalists for a different man accompanied by Royalists, for the Opportunists, the strengthening of the Senate. Boulanger advocated a plebiscite to revise the Constitution. The Orléanists, though their leader sanctioned the principle of a plebiscite, had nothing to gain by it: the Bonapartists stood no chance of success.

After his electoral successes of the last two months, it appeared that Boulanger had contracted an incurable itch for scribbling. In May 1888 it was announced that he was publishing a history of the war of 1870, in parts; the first, and only part was issued free in an edition of 2,500,000 copies. Since national defense was the highest interest, the best security for the future was to study the last war. Already in 1886 Boulanger had been making speeches urging that the army should take a new pride in itself. Now, in the preface, he advocated the right of the army to interfere in politics because it was now identical with the nation and could not be condemned to witness all blunders silently. His farewell message to the army as War Minister in 1887 had stressed the need for loyalty to political institutions and constitutional laws; now he said: "we count on nothing but you to save us from the precipice." Military Caesarism seemed to be at hand.

In Parliament Boulanger's career was as turbulent as his activity outside. On July 13, after sharp verbal disputes with the Prime Minister Floquet, in which the latter had

caustically remarked, "at your age, Monsieur, Napoleon was already dead," and had called him a liar, a duel took place. In a humiliating anticlimax Boulanger was wounded in the neck by the sixty-year-old myopic lawyer energetically wielding his sword, and had to be helped off the field of battle by his mistress as well as his doctor and seconds. The balloon of heroism had been pricked by a short-sighted politician. Boulanger was fortunate that ridicule did not kill. The French could not forget another comparable farce. Louis-Napoleon had landed at Boulogne with a beef-steak in his hat, and a circus eagle trained to fly around his head, but he ruled for nineteen years. Moreover, Boulanger could enjoy the exquisite irony of the Duchesse d'Uzès and the fiery anarchist Louise Michel sitting together at his sick bedside.

At last the republicans were fully aware of the menace. In May, Clemenceau and other Radicals formed the Society of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen to resist Boulanger, strengthen the Republic, and revive the Jacobin clubs. Jules Ferry was warning the country not to entrust itself to the enterprises of adventurers. President Carnot began making short speeches praising the army and navy, advocating union among republicans, and promising to resist anyone threatening the Republic. It was unfortunate that the speeches, lacking animation, received polite rather than enthusiastic applause. The Republic was aware of the myth of Siena: kill the conquering hero before it is too late. If Boulanger thought of himself in terms of Saul, the tallest, the most visible man in a large crowd, the Republic thought of him in terms of Periander's advice to the tyrant of Miletus: cut off the outstanding ears of corn, and the surface would be leveled.

The very nature of an attempt to capture power impels the continual reassessment of one's position. By July, Boulanger felt impelled to test his popularity by resigning his seat and standing in a number of constituencies. In the first two, he was badly beaten. Was an accidental sword-thrust by the elderly Floquet to be the most effective political weapon against Boulanger? But less than a month

later, on August 19, he was elected in all three departments, including the Nord. On August 18 he had sixteen supporters in the Chamber: on August 20, twenty-five attached themselves to his group. Had the bandwagon begun? The fear began to grow that he might present himself in every department in the general election in 1889, and thus make the election a demonstration of his personal strength.

Boulanger's three magic words, "*Dissolution, Constituant, Révision*," had become a battle-cry. On the one hand, his attacks on the very nature of Parliament, its chance majorities, its negative program, its blind deputies, and its incompetent ministries, were attractive to all favoring dissolution and wanting a change of regime. On the other hand, his bid for the support of conservative republicans, urging the necessity of an honest, decentralized Republic, election of officials by the people, reduction of taxes and expenditure, and repudiating absolute monarchy, was a shock to both Bonapartists and Orléanists. Moreover, it was noticeable that the man whom his supporters called "*le syndic de mécontents*," the democrat sprung from the people, whose life was supposed to be devoted to the service of the country, was absent from every vote on social legislation that came before the Chamber.

All the by-elections so far had been outside of Paris. But in December 1888 one of the thirty-eight members of the department of the Seine died, and therefore, under the electoral system, the whole of Paris could register its vote.

The republican forces were in a dilemma over the nomination of an opponent to Boulanger. If they nominated a strong Radical, they would frighten the moderate republicans; if they nominated a moderate, they gave the extremists an excuse for deserting them. Clemenceau again emerged with the choice, a dark horse, M. Jacques, president of the Seine General Council, a wealthy distiller who was immediately called "the anarchist publican" as well as more disagreeable things like "*le muet du serail*" or "*le candidat à la tête de bois*." The Socialists were divided on the question of support for this Radical, and the Guesdists and some Blanquists proposed their own candidate.

Boulangier was lavish with his electoral promises. He assured the shareholders of the Panama Canal Company of his sympathy for their plight, and signed a subscription list for twenty-five shares. He wrote to the veterans of the Crimean War promising them a pension, because he was "studious of the lowly and the humble in whose lot I have always been so warmly interested." He assured a deputation of publicans that he would help them get rid of adulteration inspectors and of the municipal laboratory where consumers could have articles tested.

On major issues, Boulangier was silent: on problems of church and state, on income tax, on social welfare, on laicization. Boulangier held no election meetings and thus could avoid embarrassing questions. He followed Disraeli's fundamental law of politics: never argue, repeat your original statements. He was perpetually issuing manifestoes, couched in tantalizingly ambiguous language. He was asking for a blank check, to be endorsed at his leisure.

The Bonapartists were supporting Boulangier and his "strong protest against the disastrous policy of the government." The enigmatic advice of the Comte de Paris was "remain neutral, but above all do not vote against Boulangier." To offset this and to divide the Royalists the government let it be known that, if Boulangier were not elected, the decree of exile against the Duc d'Aumale would be abrogated the following day. The royal family itself was divided, with the majority opposed to an unprincipled adventurer. The Socialists were divided; the conservative republicans were advocating neutrality—to them Boulangier meant demagoguery and Caesarism, Jacques meant demagoguery and Radicalism.

The enormous, extensive propaganda on behalf of Boulangier was the subject of much speculation. Various suggestions were being made about the source of Boulangier's money; the Jesuits, the Vatican, King Humbert, rich Americans regarding French politics as an amusing sport, all were suggested. Not until a year later was it disclosed that the chief sources were the Duchesse d'Uzès, who contributed three million francs of which she was

never given any account, Baron Hirsch, an Austrian Jew who loaned 200,000 francs, never to be returned, and the Comte de Paris, after an initial reluctance.

On the great day, January 27, 1889, Paris again, as it had done in 1873 and 1885, gave a lesson to the government of the day. Boulanger had won a magnificent victory, receiving 245,000 votes against 162,000 for his Radical opponent, 17,000 for the Socialist candidate, and 10,000 dispersed among a group of individuals such as Pasteur, De Lesseps, and MacMahon. It was doubly unfortunate for the government that the results were announced on the eighteenth anniversary of the capitulation of Paris to the Germans.

Waiting for the election results, Boulanger was dining in the Café Durand on the Place de la Madeleine with his inner group. Outside a crowd of 300,000 was aware of and participated in the mounting tension. In the crowd stood a police officer with a warrant for Boulanger's arrest if he attempted to make a disturbance, but recognizing that his ability to do this was slight. At the same time Floquet was proposing to arrest Boulanger as a conspirator against the Republic, and was prevented only by the argument of Freycinet: "Do you want to drown yourself in blood?"

When the results were announced, the great decision had to be made. Would Boulanger march the few hundred yards to the Elysée at the head of the mob and take over power? In spite of the pressure of his advisers Boulanger refused. The apogee of Boulangism had been reached. The counter-revolution had not taken place. The rest was anticlimax. As if symbolically, the Seine overflowed its banks a few days later.

Could a coup have had any chance of success? The analogy with British experience was always being used, and used incorrectly. "Be Monk" the Royalists told Boulanger, "and you will be raised to the highest level after the restoration." "Be Cromwell," said Déroulède, "I forbid you to be Monk." Without an army no one could play Caesar; without the prestige of military success, of having won an Arcola or Marengo no one could become Emperor.

As for the mob, perhaps Anatole France was right. All the great revolutionary days in France are in July, August, and September; men are willing to die for an idea, but they are not willing to catch cold for it.

Boulanger jumped into his carriage, and once again leaving the triumphs of politics for amatory pursuits, went to his mistress. Already during his visit to Yorktown comments had been made of his compulsive pursuit of women. Between 1883 and 1887 he had two mistresses. To one, a postal employee, with whom he often arranged a rendezvous in a carriage in front of the Madeleine, he suggested abortion when she was pregnant. The other lady was even more agreeable. The wife of a postal worker, she honored him by having the General's three stars and the two flags of Alsace-Lorraine put on her linen. Moreover, she was in the habit of presenting young ladies to "men of all ages, though of good character," of whom of course Boulanger was the outstanding representative. Boulanger was the object of adoration of women, young and mature alike—one even went so far as to address him as "son of Joan of Arc"—and his resistance was low.

In January 1887 Boulanger was introduced to Mme Marguerite de Bonnemain, a lady of some refinement if not of distinction. The daughter of a naval officer, she had been left an orphan, wealthy enough to attract a cavalry officer at the age of nineteen in 1874. Aware of her husband's infidelities, she left him in 1881 and sought consolation elsewhere, with Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern among others. A liaison quickly developed between the lady and Boulanger, sufficiently strong for the latter to ask his wife for a divorce. The religious scruples of his wife prevented her from granting this wish; God might condone countless infidelities, but divorce was too much.

The police were well aware of the connection and advised the government that Boulanger was preoccupied with her at Le Havre during the crisis of May 31, 1887, when it was thought Boulanger might try to overthrow the regime. So rapidly had the lady gained the affections of the General that many wondered whether she were not a German spy

or at least an agent of the government.

After his triple electoral victory in August 1888, Boulanger disappeared for two months to the disconsolation of his admirers. Only the inner group knew that he was touring Spain and North Africa with his mistress and that he seemed to be more concerned with her than with his political career. The weak chain in Boulangism was Boulanger. Fond of a life of luxury, totally lacking in morality, Boulanger was overprone to dally in a salon rather than meet his political lieutenants. The amazing thing is that a man so dedicated to the pursuit of pleasure could have become a threat to the regime. The deed, no less than the attempt, would have confounded him.

When the Chamber met on January 31, the conqueror was absent, though a large crowd was awaiting him outside. When he did return from love to politics two weeks later, he managed to remain passive under the taunts of the Prime Minister, but announced his triumph as that of a national, republican party, based on the probity of its officers, and the sincerity of universal suffrage. The Chamber could expect only dissolution from him. In a manifesto, almost certainly written by Naquet, delivered at Tours on March 17, 1889, he was at pains to declare that he was neither a monarchist nor a Caesarist: he had faith in the republican idea. But he could not prevent those who disbelieved in Republicanism from giving him their votes, although he had never asked for their support and never would. He made the call, all too familiar in French political history, to "all men of good will to rally around me" in order to foster the unity, greatness, and prosperity of the country. The Republic would be a nonparliamentary one, providing a strong government and devoting itself to the interests of the people. Boulanger seemed to be repeating the Napoleonic contempt for logic that had been shown on some of his coins: "*République Française: Napoléon Empereur.*"

Political difficulties had forced the resignation of Floquet on February 14, and it became difficult to form a government. After Carnot had tried a number of people,

including the ubiquitous Fréycinet—of whom he had said only a year before, “Never will I commission him to form a Cabinet”—and a so-called “Exhibition Cabinet” composed of all the former prime ministers, of whom there were now nine, to act as a pacifying element, he managed to persuade Tirard to form a government on February 21.

The new Minister of the Interior, Jean Constans, was dedicated to the proposition that the manipulation of elections was one of the fine arts. “France,” said Talleyrand, “could not be governed without epigrams.” Constans proved that if a minister were sufficiently strong, his wit might not have to be razor-sharp. The minister “who had turned out the monks,” who had been recalled from his post as resident-general in Tonkin because he could not be controlled from Paris, the man who was believed capable of firing on a mob first and then asking for a bill of indemnity afterwards, was about to tackle the Boulangerist menace. Four years earlier, relations had been friendly enough for him to offer the War Ministry to Boulanger. Now the spectacle of a session with an English mind-reader in which the latter had read Boulanger’s mind, giving Carnot six months more and foretelling the General’s line of march to Stuttgart, left Constans with different emotions.

The first order of business was the alteration of the electoral system to handicap Boulanger. The present system had been advocated by Gambetta in order to weaken local pressures and influences on deputies, end “pork-barrel” legislation, and allow the government to operate with greater independence. It involved large constituencies in which all the electors voted for a list of candidates. At the general election, the party with a majority in each department carried all the seats. If one member died or resigned between elections, all the constituents could vote for the one man to be elected; the by-election could therefore be turned into a plebiscite. The opponents of this electoral system had objected that the system might really provide a referendum on one man, namely Gambetta. It was therefore not until his death that the system had been approved in 1885. But now the possibility of a referendum on

Boulanger was as strong as it had been on Gambetta. The electoral system was changed back to district voting, allowing only one man to be chosen in one area.

Other steps to prevent a Boulangist conquest of power were the proposal to restrict candidates to two constituencies only, and the curious proposal of Clemenceau, for which there was a precedent of 1790, that no member of the present Chamber should be re-elected—a proposal that was not likely to endear itself to deputies. Even art was forced into service in good Platonic fashion. A bust of Boulanger to be placed in the International Exhibition was banned—the inference being that it was the subject, not the artistic merit of the bust that had brought the exclusion. A less significant form of art, street cries, was also controlled. Newspapers or other documents sold or given in the streets were not to be “cried” except by giving the essential information of title and price.

More serious for Boulanger was the government’s pretext, in a protest against the French bombardment of Cosacks at Sagallo, to take action against the League of Patriots. This organization had resulted from the dispute between Ferry, then Minister of Education, and Déroulède over the selection of school textbooks in 1882. Originally its aim had been to provide a source of patriotic instruction, but it soon also provided the framework of a volunteer army, closely associated with gymnastic and rifle clubs, always ready to act against Germany to regain the two lost provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, in much the same way as the Prussians had organized the Turnerverein after the defeat of Jena to train their youth for the coming war of independence. The combination of books, songs, rifle practice, and gymnastics proved attractive to French youth.

But however laudable the original aims of the League, its emphasis and direction had completely changed. It had become a political organization, more an internal menace than a threat to the foreign enemy. It was strong, claiming 70,000 members in Paris alone; the fact that the members were armed with revolvers meant possible violent demon-

strations on the streets. The League was providing a staff and election agents for Boulanger; it had committees in every arrondissement, and district committees in the provinces. Each arrondissement was divided into groups of streets, with a network of committees. All the committees were in a state of permanent mobilization, complete with passwords and secret signs.

While the League was allied with the Opportunists, it was tolerated: when it became an ally of Boulanger, it opened itself to prosecution. The government moved against it at the beginning of March 1889, accusing it of committing acts which might lead to a conflict with a foreign power. The League was dissolved; it could hold no meetings, its papers and 4,000 letters were seized, and its leaders were arrested. The president of the League, the mercurial poet-politician Déroulède, and the general secretary, Richard, were prosecuted. When Laguerre expressed indignation at his omission from prosecution, the government was prepared to satisfy such a dedicated aspirant to martyrdom. Amid turbulent scenes, the Minister of Justice, Thévenet, on March 11, 1889, asked the two Chambers for permission to prosecute three deputies and Naquet, a Senator. So excited did one Boulangist become that, prevented from fighting a duel after one exchange, he relieved his frustration by going home and firing off a six-barrel revolver indoors—a novel and relatively inoffensive method of dueling.

Accusations by the Boulangists against Constans—that in Tonkin he had taken a heavy bribe to allow public gambling, and that he was “unduly subservient to financial interests” by accepting a check for the use of his name by an insurance company—were not sufficient to stop the prosecution, or reduce the vigorous activity of the Minister of the Interior. By the end of March 1888, there were carefully planted rumors of the arrest and prosecution of Boulanger himself. In fact on April 8 the President did sign a decree setting up the Senate as a High Court to try Boulanger on charges of conspiracy against the state.

For Boulanger there were three possible alternatives. He



Georges Clemenceau (1841–1929) in early middle age. (*Bettmann Archive.*)

could go to the streets with the League of Patriots. The success of such a move was now highly dubious. Moreover, he still hoped for a legal victory. Had he not argued on the victorious January 27: "Why should I conquer power illegally when I am certain of being carried to it unanimously by the whole of France in six months?" The Empire, he said, had died of its origin; Déroulède was wiser in answering, "It lasted eighteen years."

He could submit to arrest and go to prison. This was not an appealing prospect for a luxury-loving individual.

Moreover, the government would hardly be gracious enough to allow Mme de Bonnemain to share confinement with him. And also it was certain that a public trial would bring to light a record of duplicity and deception that was likely to shock the sensibility of his more moral supporters. The only course was to flee, at least until the next election. Amatory dalliance could be obtained at the price of being forgotten.

On March 13, Boulanger left for Brussels: reading the morning newspapers and seeing no mention of his possible arrest, he returned the next day. But on April 1, the most appropriate day of the year, accompanied by Madame and followed by the police, he again left for Brussels. When the news came that his train had crossed the frontier, Constans and a small group of friends celebrated with champagne.

Boulanger had played right into the hands of the Minister. Constans was reluctant to imprison Boulanger, but knew he must get rid of him. He wrote a letter, in the presence of a man he knew to be a Boulangist spy, deliberately allowing the agent to see it and knowing that the information of his impending arrest would be passed on to Boulanger. A simple trick had been enough to frighten Boulanger out of the country.

The path of the political exile never runs smooth. Within a few days of his arrival in Brussels, the secretary of the Belgian Minister of Justice visited Boulanger to ask whether he intended to stay. Boulanger, taking the diplomatic hint that Belgium was embarrassed over the possibility of extradition, left for London on April 24. He had now reached the inevitable residence of nineteenth-century exiles, and the indispensable place for all pretenders to serve their political apprenticeship. Appropriately enough he arrived in thick fog; politically, he never emerged from the mist. The future Napoleon III had organized his conspiracy at Chislehurst in the intervals between romantic episodes. For Boulanger there appeared not to be sufficient intervals; there were salons to attend, the theaters, a Randolph Churchill dinner, a garden party of the Prince of Wales.

Meanwhile, his trial was held in secret. The first magistrate charged with presiding over the case, M. Bouchez, had resigned because he did not find in the counts of the indictment sufficient grounds on which to proceed. The magistrate who replaced him, Quesnay de Beaurepaire, was alive for possible material that might be used for a future novel to be written under his pseudonym, Jules de Glouvet. In August the Senate, not unsurprisingly, found him guilty. But the surprise was that he was guilty not only of treason and conspiracy, as were Rochefort and Dillon along with him, but also of embezzlement because he had, while Minister of War, used defense funds for personal publicity. Treason was excusable; stealing was unpardonable.

In spite of the continuing support of the Comte de Paris, the tide had turned against Boulanger. In July, he had been nominated in 300 cantons in the local elections, but was elected only in 12. In the general election of September-October, the Boulangists, in spite of considerable success in Paris, where Boulanger himself had been elected for Clignancourt, suffered a severe defeat.

They had fought the election as a curious coalition—anarchists, ultramontanes, secularists, Bonapartists, Orléanists, anti-Semites—an improbable combination of the Comte de Mun, a reactionary Catholic; Naquet, the Jewish author of the divorce law; Rochefort, an anticlerical Radical; and Paul de Cassagnac, a pure Bonapartist. The advice to their followers of both the Comte de Paris and Prince Victor Napoleon not "to regard as enemies those who are fighting the same adversaries as yourselves" had been disregarded.

Against 365 Republicans, there were elected only 43 Boulangists, 112 Monarchists, and 62 Bonapartists. Several of the leading Boulangists—Rochefort, Andrieux, and Naquet among them—were either defeated or deprived of their seat for an infringement of the electoral laws. Perhaps the only consolation the Boulangists could draw from the election results was the defeat of the strong but unpopular Ferry. Boulangism was over. The crowds that had



Léon Gambetta (1838–1882). (*Bettmann Archive.*)

eagerly cheered Boulanger were now engaged in diversions of their own. Boulanger, the handsome general, the proud possessor of the Grand Order of the Legion of Honor, was now a condemned criminal. The discredited Comte de Paris had to explain: "I used against the Republic the weapons which it placed in my hands."

The political extinction of Boulanger was taken for granted. When on August 9, 1889, he wrote to Alexander I, presenting himself as the guarantor of law and order and of a strong France, and promising to correct the par-

liamentary system, Alexander ignored the letter. In France the Russian ruler was to allow the "*Marseillaise*" to soothe away his fears of a Republic; French loans spoke more eloquently than ideological objection. Between 1884 and 1900, of the 16 billion francs worth of foreign bonds bought by Frenchmen, 6½ billion francs were spent on Russian bonds.

Nothing showed the extinction better than the behavior of the former supporters or disciples. At the time of his flight, Boulanger had been accused of desertion. Yet he can hardly be blamed for refusing to accept the argument of Michelin, the deputy for the Seine, that a leader ought to let himself be imprisoned like Barbès, or shot like Delescluze. Now the Boulangists in the Chamber concealed their cockades. Meyer, the former avenue to funds, rejected Boulanger: "The star has become hazy and now there are only Chinese shadows. The nation thought it had found in Boulanger someone to lead it in its yearning for an emancipating ideal, but, alas, he was incapable of creating what the nation required." Meyer, after all, had pursued a policy that had enabled him to attend successively the obsequies of Napoleon III, the Prince Imperial, the Comte de Chambord, and the Comte de Paris.

The former disciples were quarreling. On September 6, 1890, Rochefort and Thiébaud wandered up and down the Belgian-Dutch frontier accompanied by their seconds and doctors trying to escape a horde of reporters and police in order to find a quiet spot in which to duel. When, after two false starts, a spot was found, the only conveyance to it turned out to be a milk cart drawn by six dogs. Since no self-respecting duelist could travel to the field of battle in this way, Rochefort waited for a more appropriate vehicle, a horse carriage. As an anticlimax to the hectic efforts to find the spot, Rochefort played with his opponent until he had inflicted that slight wound which honor required and which an attendant doctor declare sufficient to end the combat. At least eight other recorded duels followed in which Boulangists similarly satisfied honor.

Boulanger was being forgotten; France had both bread and circuses. It was an apt commentary on Boulanger's defeat that, on the day after the second ballot of October 7, the highest number of tickets up to that date, 335,000, were sold at the Exhibition. As if to display the triumph of the Republic, the President, eleven days later, gave a brilliant ball to which 8,000 people were invited. The Prince of Monaco put on a show of his own and began a precedent by taking an American lady for his second wife.

Moving from London to Jersey in October, Boulanger was enjoying life with his mistress at a villa in St. Brelade's Bay; flirting with Pierre Dennis, the old Communard who introduced him to "the social problem"; and defending his behavior to the few disciples who remained faithful. Unfounded rumors circulated that he was preparing a manuscript to vindicate himself after the startling revelations of Mermeix's *Coulisses du Boulangisme*, which had been published as articles in *Figaro*. One of his supporters had already fought a harmless duel with Mermeix in the garden of Laguerre's house, but Boulanger could not even fight a literary battle. Déroulède, after a stormy interview, parted from him by saying: "We know you have military courage, but you lack civil courage."

At the beginning of May 1891, he and Mme de Bonne-main, who was sick with tuberculosis, left Jersey for Brussels. Even now he was still dreaming. In a newspaper interview, he told of a "new program of struggle" and promised that he would soon return to France and challenge the verdict of his trial. But if the opium he was now taking from time to time did not completely limit his will, his mistress did. "All ambition," commented Gautier, "died on the arms of a woman." After a severe illness she died on July 16, 1891. For two months Boulanger was insupportable, visiting her grave at Ixelles, a suburb of Brussels, every day. On September 29, 1891, he wrote his political testament, regretting only that he had not died as a soldier on the field of battle, and ending with "*Vive la*

France! Vive la République!" The next day he shot himself on her grave. The tomb now simply reads "*Marguerite et Georges.*"

Even before Boulanger was interred, the inquest had already begun. What could explain the extraordinary political strength he had acquired in such a short time? A number of factors played their part: the parliamentary and governmental deficiencies, the economic crisis through which France in particular and Europe in general had passed, the succession of bad harvests, the revelations of political corruption and the Wilson scandal, the loss of savings through the crash of the Union Générale bank, the anticlerical policy of the Radicals, the tension with Germany, the rise of a chauvinistic imperialism.

Yet perhaps Clemenceau summed up best in his remark that Boulangism was more a religious than a political manifestation; for many, the General was a savior who would make any effort unnecessary. Boulangism was only one example of those moods which occasionally sweep a country, moods of anxiety, of fear, of prejudice, of hope, and which seem to be uncontrollable or irremediable by rational analysis. "What typifies and sets in motion popular heroes," argued the young Boulangist novelist Maurice Barrès, "is not so much their own will as the image that the populace makes of them." The essence of the movement continually changed, from an invention of the Radicals to a spiritual experience to an electoral alliance in which the partners distrusted each other almost as much as the opposition. Yet through it all, the popularity of Boulanger remains inexplicable. The Republic was fortunate that he could not live up to his destiny, that he was a person of quite exceptional mediocrity. But the warning of Benjamin Constant remained; a country which can be saved only by this or that special man will never be saved for long even by him; what is more, it would not deserve so to be saved.

Brann the Iconoclast

William L. Rivers

Texans had gulped down a strong dose of civilization by the 1890's—barbed wire held the cattle, booster clubs were booming, and religion had set in—but the hard-knuckle scene in the office of the San Antonio *Daily Light* on the morning of July 29, 1894, was not unusual; William Cowper Brann was involved.

A skinny, tall-standing six-footer, Brann was aflame in his fashion, dictating a story for the next day's paper. In walked W. H. Brooker, a local lawyer, hugely built from his shoulders to his hips. Brann, wiry and unafraid, hadn't a chance. Brooker had only one arm, but he weighed 225 pounds to Brann's 150. As they closed, Brooker bludgeoned the lean editor down. Every time Brann pushed up to rise from the floor, Brooker raised his hard fist above his head like a sledge and hammered him down again. Then, triumphantly, he warned that the editorial Brann had printed the day before must be retracted or Brann's brains would be blown out.

Brann's friends could have told Brooker what would happen. Instead of retracting, Brann stuffed a pistol into



the waistband of his trousers the next day and went hunting. Watching from his office as the slender, beaten Brann walked the streets with the purposeful air of a butcher, Brooker was unnerved and sent two friends to withdraw the threat.

William Cowper Brann was probably the world's worst fighter, but he would battle anybody, anywhere, with anything. Among his antagonists were three college students, three newspaper editors, and an old man who thought his daughter had been insulted—all of whom won. There is no record that Brann ever bruised anyone in a fight, or backed down from one. He always came battling back like an animated sponge, drawing strength from the taste of his own blood.

Other human punching bags have been laughed off or killed off, but Texas could find no way to deal with a man who honed words until they were fine cutting instruments. He lanced most of his enemies with the kind of hyperbole he used to describe one who was heading for Europe:

By feeding himself but once a day, and then with a piece of fat pork attached to a cotton cord, half-soling his pants with seaweed and going barefoot in summer to save his shoes, he was able to hang onto his land until the industry and enterprise of others made it worth a dollar an acre, when he passed it on to his posterity simply because it wasn't portable. Would to heaven all the half-baked American slobs who worship at the shrine of European flunkysm would follow in his footsteps to England. The brainless inanities will breed and we should encourage them to drop their worthless calves in a foreign country.

Brann seemed to delight in smearing the home scene, slashing at Texas preachers ("too many ministers imagine that a criticism of themselves is an insult to the Almighty"), Texas churchgoers ("the man who can find intellectual food in sermons can get the D.T.'s from drinking the froth from a bottle of pop"), and the Texas post office ("when a man lacks sufficient intelligence to manage a mule and cannot be trusted in a cotton patch without a keeper, he secures a situation in the postal service"). There were articles titled "Anthony the Abominable," "The Fashionable Fornicators," and "Candidate for Castration."

To shame him, the Baptists called him the "Apostle of the Devil." Brann adopted the title, signing some of his letters "Yours in Christ, The Apostle."

Opponents arranged with friends in the Waco post office to have Brann's magazine *The Iconoclast* "lost in the mails," and rumors ballooned: Brann had been ridden out of other Texas cities on rails, Brann was an ex-convict, Brann was born a bastard. The editor frustrated the attacks simply, reprinting the stories about himself in high, impatient contempt.

When his opposition became more primitive, marks on the editor were richly apparent, and once the entire male student body of Waco's Baylor University—a school devoted to producing preachers—skirmished with the town police in an effort to speed Brann toward his appointment with Satan.

Finally, Brann shot it out with an enemy; even at the last he was only second-best in battle. He hit his man with all six shots, but his assailant lingered longer before dying.

Waco breathed more easily, but there were other, curious reactions. Called "The Wizard of Words" in life, in death he was compared with Shakespeare, Swift, and Homer. Scholars attempted learned measurements of his influence and talent, and Brann's enemies learned of his other dimensions: that he was the gentlest of men around women, a devoted family man, a stern moralist aiming at reform—and a deeply religious believer in God.

His admirers called him "the brightest and purest nobleman God ever created," his detractors said he was "the slime of the dirtiest Texas gutter," and only the scholars backed up to the beginning to measure the man.

It was clear from the start that Billy Brann was spirited. Noble J. Brann, a Presbyterian minister in Milton Station, Illinois, was unable to raise the boy when Mrs. Brann died in 1857. The two-year-old was turned over to foster parents, but Preacher Brann kept a dismayed eye on him. Once, long after his son had become notorious, his father reminisced: "Well, Billy, you always was a mighty bad boy. I kind of calculated you'd go to hell some day, but

Praise God, I never thought you was bound for Texas."

Little Billy proved to his foster parents, a devout farm couple named Hawkins, that he was at least bound for hell. When he was twelve years old, he stole an entire train. It was standing, puffing irresistibly, on the main track at Humboldt. The crew was attacking a watermelon on the station steps, so the boy crept up to the locomotive, clambered into the cab, and pulled the lever. The big train rattled off, past Flat Branch, into the open country, and churned on toward Mattoon, but it didn't get there. The conductor, who had been sleeping in the caboose, crawled over the cars and battled Billy and the train until both stopped.

Nobody was surprised when the "Hawkins' hellion" packed all his belongings in a box one night and ran away without a good-by. He was a spindly thirteen-year-old, had a third-grade education, and was full of himself. He began rounding out his practical education immediately, knocking up against life from as many directions as possible, leaping from bellhop to railroad fireman and once even managing an opera company.

When he was seventeen, Brann became a commission salesman for a printing house. His very first prospect, the owner of a dry goods store, wanted to see everything in the sample case. He would admire a flashy letterhead, run to wait on a customer, then hurry back to see another item. Most of the morning went by in this diverting fashion; Brann pictured his first large order.

Then, at noon, he found that the merchant had slipped out to lunch, leaving his wife in charge. When the owner returned, he said, no, no order. He was overstocked on stationery.

Brann realized immediately that he was being initiated into the knighthood of the road. Smothering his quick anger, he admitted that it certainly had been a good one on him, and the merchant let his mirth escape. Brann said he was glad to have the hazing over, but, he asked seriously, didn't the store have something in a good, stout suit that would make him look less like a beginning drummer?

Of course, it did. Brann tried on one suit, almost took

it—bringing his billfold out—then asked to see another. No, that one wasn't quite it, either. Finally, when he had worn away part of the afternoon and several of the suits, Brann told the merchant that he didn't actually need any clothes, since, as any lunatic-at-large could see, he was wearing a suit. He was overstocked.

Then Brann kicked over a clothes rack and walked out. He worked for the rest of the day, wrote one small order, then walked to the banks of a river and threw his sample case as far as it would go.

That was a panic year, and Brann never forgot it. Later, he told friends: "I was one of 50,000 men in town who really wanted work and couldn't find it. Fifty thousand unemployed, destitute and desperate men in one city." He tramped a hundred hungry miles through the snow and found three days' work—loading ice into boxcars.

After that, a fierce love of the laboring man began to burn Brann. His fortunes improved—he found a good job and a good wife—but he had the crusading itch. The sight of a hungry child or a down-and-outer in rags made him yearn to cut at the rich and well-born, the pretentious and the political. He read everything he could find and worked his way toward journalism, where he thought he would have a chance to give the world twenty-four hours to reform or get out.

But the man with the close-clipped, dark brown hair and the erect, easy figure who was job-hunting in the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat* office in 1883 appeared to be anything but a rabblouser. One look at the firm, kind face inspired liking in Editor Joseph McCullagh. Brann was hired.

McCullagh admitted to a faint uneasy feeling, however. This Brann not only seemed to have read everything but he also talked about music, art, and theology with the loving respect of a professor. It would be good to have an educated man around, but a mannerly reporter? He'd need some stiffening to get by in the brawling world of St. Louis journalism.

Wanting his new man to succeed, McCullagh gave Brann two warning bits of advice: "Journalism is knowing where

hell will break loose and having a reporter on the spot," and "When I tell you to go after a man, you can't just pour a barrel of vinegar over him; you've got to put a drop of vitriol on him."

Brann was a learner; he reversed the counsel, *causing* hell to break loose wherever he was, and pouring a barrel of vitriol over his opponents.

One of his first *Globe-Democrat* items gave this estimate of a windy politician:

Nature plays no favorites. When she gives a man a lower-case brain, she makes amends by supplying him with a display-type mouth.

After several such bites at the body politic, Brann was hastily assigned to a less explosive area, society, but he dealt body blows even at the elite:

... That annual intumescence of anthropoid idiocy known as the Veiled Prophets Ball. Everybody who entered that Circean Circle was required to personate an ape—to wear a full-dress suit. I hid behind a fat man who resembled nothing so much as Mark Twain's frog with his belly full of bird shot. I took a brief survey of the assembled imbeciles, beat a hasty retreat and threw my borrowed plumage in the wood-box.

Fired by the *Globe-Democrat* for laying open too many of St. Louis' more elegant hides, Brann went to Texas. He was an editorial writer for the *Galveston Tribune* for just long enough to insult that paper's sacred cows, and lasted five months with the *Galveston News*.

By the time he became an editorial writer for the *Houston Post*, Brann was learning to loathe newspapers. He would have made a sour approach to any job then, in part because the plays he had written were startlingly unsuccessful, mostly because of the suicide of his daughter Inez. Her death haunted Brann throughout his life, but he would have been unhappy on the *Post* in any case. His editorials hit hard; the editor, R. M. Johnson, did not want his comfortable boat tilted.

"This paper," Brann finally told Johnson, "is so low that the very dogs no longer stop in front of the office, in spite of that seductive sign, *Houston Post*."

"Out! Out!" sputtered Johnson, and Brann was off again.

The last displacement led Brann to take stock. He had been fired by four papers, but his way with the words of attack and the cruel hook of his humor had made him the best-known writer in Texas. There was only one conclusion: newspapers were at fault for not allowing him more freedom to puncture pomposity.

Moving to Austin, Brann announced publication of *The Iconoclast*. "This magazine will not pander to the prejudice of any creed, class or calling, but will tell the truth as I understand it—as long as men can be found who have the stomachs for it."

The first issue kept the promise. There were articles entitled "The American Press—Its Hypocrisy and Cowardice," "The Criminal's Pard—Legislators and Lawyers," "Female Chastity—What Is It?," and "Playing the Pimp—The Personal Column in Newspapers."

The reactions were invariably spirited. One reader stopped Brann on the street and said: "Mister Editor, I found a grammatical error in your paper." Brann snapped: "The hell you say! What else did you find—any ideas? Or would you recognize one?" Then they grappled.

Many others were slashed ("you are an unhung idiot") in reply to letters from readers printed in *The Iconoclast*. Brann would lance at any man, but he tried to maintain a chivalrous attitude toward women. Once he answered a letter with: "I am so grateful to you for setting me right that I plan to establish a Jackass Department in *The Iconoclast* for your benefit." The following day, a shapely young lady with chilly blue eyes visited Brann. Thinking she was there to compliment him on his magazine, the editor (a faithful husband, but a man with a wide, appreciative eye) smoothed his hair, fingered his string tie, and bowed her toward a chair. Without a word, the lady brought around a sharp slap and walked out.

Brann never made that mistake again. When he received a letter signed "A. L. Jenks," he began his usual bludgeoning reply, then interrupted the answer:

... But right here a question, Jenks. How do you get into your clothes? Do you go into them headfirst, then pose before an amorous looking-glass with your mouth full of pins; or do you insert yourself one leg at a time, then make frantic swipes under the bureau for collar buttons while the circumambient ether assumes a cerulean hue? The question is important. Now A. L. Jenks, if the front elevation of your name is Amanda Louise, this don't go; but if it be Abraham Lincoln, it goes with altitudinous *eclat* and wild acclaim.

His singleminded assaults on sham made Brann the literary love of many an intelligent man ("Brann is an intellectual buzzsaw," a Harvard professor told his classes) and the verbal fire that burned through every issue made delighted readers of the uneducated. Even those who gritted their teeth and wanted to throttle the editor were magnetized by *The Iconoclast*.

Then Brann drifted heavily toward politics, backing losers every time, and *The Iconoclast* began to fail. Running out of money, Brann tried to recoup by lecturing, then by having his own plays produced, but his magazine went from monthly to quarterly, then died.

The editor carried a paradoxical asset away from the failure. Before the death of *The Iconoclast*, the greatest pulpit-pounder of his day, the Rev. T. DeWitt Talmadge, leaned out over his Brooklyn congregation and named Brann the "Apostle of the Devil." Brann valued words too well not to know how precious the label could become.

Detouring in the pursuit of his peculiar star, Brann spent almost two years with the *San Antonio Express*, doing battle in San Antonio with Brooker, the one-armed lawyer, and developing a public style beyond his lecture platform manner.

Walking into a wealthy church one morning, Brann saw the minister hold up a copy of the *Express* in one hand, the Bible in the other. "Will you take Brann or the Bible?" he thundered. Brann rose and, looking concerned, said: "A few of these sinners on the back row are a trifle subsequent in making up their minds, Reverend."

Brann had almost given up trying to explain that he was

not an atheist but a deist, rejecting revealed religion but believing in God and immortality. He went far out of his way to bait the unbelievers.

"I don't believe *anything* I can't prove," an atheist exclaimed to Brann.

"Then why," he replied, "do you take such a lively interest in your wife's children?"

The name "Apostle of the Devil" trailed him when he moved to Waco to re-establish *The Iconoclast*, and Brann helped promote his magazine by making the most of the title. "I admit a personal fondness for Satan," he said, "because he sat into the game with a cash capital of one snake and now he's got half the globe grabbed and an option on the other half."

A few of the broad-gauge religionists who understood deism and Brann's desire to rid religion of its schisms became warm supporters, but most of Waco seemed to agree with a minister who declared: "This Brann should be barrelled up and floated into the Gulf of Mexico to perish miserably."

Heavily Baptist Waco became overwhelmingly anti-Brann when the new *Iconoclast*, published again in February 1895, supported the small Jewish and Catholic minorities. When two prominent legalists launched anti-Semitic attacks, *The Iconoclast* suggested: "The Jews should catch Justice Pryor and Judge Hilton and circumcize them with an oyster shell."

When the Rev. Joseph Slattery, a converted Catholic, came to Waco to speak on "Why I Left the Roman Catholic Priesthood and What I Saw Therein," Brann and a few friends attended. As Slattery attacked Catholicism, to the obvious delight of his Baptist listeners, the slight, neatly dressed Brann rose and stated evenly: "I'm sorry, but you're mistaken about those facts."

Slattery apparently ignored the interruption, but began to talk about Brann: "San Antonio wouldn't take it. They ran the Apostle of the Devil right out . . ."

Brann shouted: "You're not only misstating facts, you're a damned liar!"

Yells of "get Brann!" thundered over the few cheers for him, but Brann had fiercely loyal friends. As Slattery's followers started for him, knives and guns suddenly appearing, the editor was hustled to the door, his friends taking most of the battering. Unable to resist the ironic touch even as he was hustled to safety, Brann blew a kiss to the fuming Slattery.

The climax came when the Baptists' pride, Baylor University, was attacked. Waco became a battleground. Brann had aimed at Baylor before, but an embarrassing issue arose when the university brought to Waco Antonia Teixeira, a pretty young Brazilian who was to be educated as a missionary, then return to her native country to convert others. To pay for her room and board, she worked in the kitchen of the university president, Rufus Burlson.

The missionary training went awry. It became obvious when Antonia was sixteen that she was pregnant. The girl said that she had been raped three times by Steen Morris, a brother of the Rev. S. L. Morris, who was Burlson's son-in-law. Antonia also said that she had complained tearfully about Steen Morris to Mrs. Burlson, but that nothing had been done.

The defense was immediate and scathing. President Burlson claimed, "She's just crazy about boys," and said that the idea that she had been raped was preposterous. Burlson also denied that the girl had complained to his wife, and it was charged that the girl had been sleeping with a Negro servant. Later, Antonia gave birth to a white daughter who soon died.

Brann, his chivalry burning, lashed Baylor, using the pages of *The Iconoclast* to show that the girl had been foully used, and concluded one of his articles:

"The scandal at Baylor leads me to believe that the Baptists are not held under water long enough."

Baylor, for the first time nearly silent in tilts with Brann, only circulated a series of anonymous attacks on the editor. But the lull was deceiving. In October 1895 Brann noted that Baylor's enrollment was establishing a record:

This proves that Texas Baptists are determined to support Baylor at any cost—that they believe it better that their daughters should be exposed to its historic dangers and their sons condemned to grow up in ignorance than that this manufactory of ministers and Magdalens should be permitted to perish. It is devoutly hoped that the recent expose of Baylor's criminal carelessness will have a beneficial effect—that henceforth orphan girls will not be ravished on the premises of the president, and that fewer young ladies will be sent home pregnant. *The Iconoclast* would like to see Baylor University, so-called, become an honor to Texas rather than an eyesore, would like to hear it referred to by men about town as better than a harem.

That did it. Baylor students held a mass meeting and named three huskies to carry out the first part of the battle plan. Buckling on their pistols, they drove to Brann's office and entered with a rush, two of them locking the skinny editor's arms behind his back while the third held his pistol on the printers. White-faced, Brann managed an even-voiced comment as he was roughed along to the cab: "Well, boys, you can't kill me but once."

Whipped to full speed, the horses went racing up Fifth Street toward the university. The Waco police pursued on foot, but other students were ready. There were sharp, loud scuffles, the police pressed on—and found the Baylor military unit drawn up across the road with fixed bayonets. That was the end of the police activity.

Dragged to the front of the main hall, Brann was knocked about, threatened with tar and feathers, then given a paper to sign. It was a promise that he would leave town within twenty-four hours. Brann signed it.

His friends were incredulous, until Brann drove his carriage out of town, announced that he had carried out the bargain, then turned around and drove back to his office, saying: "They can't run me out of Waco or stop *The Iconoclast* unless they kill me."

At least one family was ready to kill him the next day. Regretting that his article had been taken as an insult to Baylor's female students rather than the university authorities, Brann published a notice in the *Evening Telegraph* denying any slur on the former and asserting that the attack was aimed at the administration and faculty.

But there were also female instructors at Baylor, includ-

ing one, a Miss Scarborough, whose family lived in Waco. The Scarborroughs took Brann's explanation as a direct insult. Walking down the corridor to his office in the Provident Building, Brann was suddenly confronted by Miss Scarborough's brother George and her father. While the old man leveled his revolver at Brann, George disarmed him. Then the elder Scarborough smashed Brann to the floor with his cane, beat him, and kicked him downstairs.

Brann was battered but on his feet when the two enraged men reached him. George Scarborough swung on the wavering Brann, the older man smacked him with his cane. The editor was reeling when one of the youths who had escorted him on the wild ride to the campus grabbed a carriage whip and brought it down on his head and shoulders. Brann was sagging and cut, his blood coloring the street, before bystanders were able to halt the butchery.

Although Brann was down for a few days, his friends were not. Judge G. B. Gerald wrote a paper defending Brann. The article was to be published in the *Waco Times-Herald*, but the editor, J. W. Harris, told Gerald it was too extreme. They argued, then fought a bitter slugging match that left Gerald as battered as Brann. The old judge (who was said by Brann not to know fear—"he thinks it's some kind of disease like smallpox and only knows he hasn't had it") published a circular calling Harris "a psalm-singing son-of-a-bitch."

There was nothing to do but duel it out. On the morning of November 19, Judge Gerald killed J. W. Harris, was challenged by his brother, W. A. Harris, and gunned him down, too.

The town had become accustomed to blood, but even frenzied Waco knew that the Brann-Baylor battles had been carried too far. There was a muttering truce for a time, marked only by cutting words and deep-lying bitterness.

Brann was quieter now, contenting himself with occasional suggestions that the grave of the Brazilian girl's baby be marked by a bust of President Burlson on a marble pyramid that would bear the inscription: "Sacred to the memory of the infant daughter of the ward of Baptist Church and an unknown member of the Baylor University stud."

In his home, Brann would submit laughingly to his children, who pulled him off the couch by his long, thin legs and dragged him around the floor. In his study, a bay-windowed front room, Brann would eat his lunch at his desk, dropping crumbs for the little lizard that lived on the window ledge. The daughter of a Brann admirer, who had long begged her father for a chance to meet "Mr. Fire-Brann," met him and exclaimed: "He's *aloof*!"

On a lecture trip to St. Louis, the editor admitted to his friend William Marion Reedy, editor of the *Mirror*, that even though the circulation of *The Iconoclast* was now more than 100,000, he was losing faith in his approach to reform. "But I've got to attack personalities to get the people to consider principles."

Reedy answered that if Brann attracted attention by shocking readers, he could hold them only with continued shock treatments. Brann became despondent. "I'm only a fad. I'll pass away when my vogue is done."

Reedy was writing an appreciative estimate of his friend ("... a person of almost feminine fineness") even as Brann made the return trip to the still-simmering Waco.

The uneasy truce was ending; several men had threatened Brann. He began revolver practice in the woods near his home, and found that he had a remarkable aptitude for gunfighting. Dressed in black and white, his Prince Albert coat flopping and stiff white shirt and black bow tie awry, Brann would stride with his back to the target, then wheel swiftly and fire. Every shot chewed the little square of paper tacked to the tree.

The chance to use his newly developed talent came soon. At four o'clock on the afternoon of April 1, 1896, Brann went to town to get a shave. He returned after five with his business manager, W. H. Ward. There was no indication that the warm dusk of this April Fools' Day was to be climactic: there were the same sideward glances and gray looks, from enemies; his friends greeted the editor in that special, eager tone reserved for the individualist, the man apart.

Then, a few feet past 111 South Fourth Street, the office



of a lawyer named Tom Davis, Brann and Ward heard a shout: "You damned son-of-a-bitch, were you looking for me?" As Davis spoke, he drew his revolver and fired once. The bullet slammed into Brann's back. Ward leaped, grasped the muzzle of the revolver, and the second bullet ripped through his hand.

As the first shot hit him, Brann began a staggering turn, pulling his revolver as he wheeled. He gunned Davis down with one shot. Davis raised himself on his elbow and fired twice more, unsteadily. Brann, who was standing again after the shock of the first bullet, felt the slugs tear at him, but he continued to fire. Every bullet hit the prostrate Davis.

Only the shot that had hit Brann in the back proved to be a serious wound. It had clipped a large bronchial artery as it went through his body. Lying in the hospital, Brann began to improve, but as his pulse grew stronger the injured vascular wall gave way and hemorrhage began. Brann died seven hours after the fight.

Longtime residents were sure the shooting was only the logical end of Brann's troubles with Baylor. However, a few began to believe that Davis shot the editor only to gain favor with city leaders, supporters of Baylor, when a deputy sheriff testified that Davis had been charged with forgery.

Many leading writers echoed Elbert Hubbard: "Brann shook his cap, flourished his bauble, gave a toss to his fine head, and with tongue in cheek asked questions and propounded conundrums that stupid hypocrisy couldn't answer."

In Waco, the friends of Brann were bitter, saying that the town had not been worthy of the genius who lived there. They were joined at his funeral by admirers from other Texas cities, making his funeral procession the longest in Waco history.

Baylor and its best friends breathed more easily, however, and said that it had been God's will that the dark spirit of *The Iconoclast* had been gathered up. Waco and Texas could go back to civilizing now that the Apostle of the Devil was traveling to the place he called "Satan's celebrated winter resort."

Tocqueville's Influence^{*}

J. P. Mayer

Alexis de Tocqueville published the first two volumes of his *Democracy in America* in 1835. Almost overnight he became a celebrated author; edition followed edition, and the book was immediately translated into English by Henry Reeve. No less a thinker than John Stuart Mill compared it to Montesquieu's *Esprit des lois*. A German translation—and many others—followed. Of the many French critics who reviewed it, I quote only Sainte-Beuve, who wrote in *La Revue des Deux Mondes*:

If one were to survey completely M. de Tocqueville's book, it would provide matter for the examination of all capital questions of modern politics. . . . In praising such a recently published book, one is nevertheless only voicing the already established judgment of all competent and serious people. The approval of Chateaubriand, of Royer-Collard, of Lamartine, was expressed strongly enough for us to record it without fear of letting ourselves be deceived by polite superficialities. We would have to go very far back to find a book of science and political observation which aroused attention and satisfied thinkers to such a degree.

After the publication of the *Democracy*, Tocqueville returned to England—he had already been there in 1833—

^{*} This essay was originally read, in somewhat different form, as a public lecture at Yale University.

where he was received as a celebrated political thinker for whom every door of the most exclusive homes was opened. In his *Journeys to England and Ireland* there are accounts of some of the persons he met and conversed with. John Stuart Mill was, from our point of view here, probably the most important one, and I shall return to this encounter presently. While Tocqueville's influence on Mill was considerable, Tocqueville, if I am not mistaken, only drew information from the British philosopher. Less important information, perhaps, than from Nassau William Senior, with whom Tocqueville remained in intimate contact until his death. On his return to France, Tocqueville began to write the last two volumes of the *Democracy*, which were published in 1840. Sainte-Beuve was less favorable on the conclusion of Tocqueville's great work than he had been before:

America, for almost ten years since he left, has been no more than a pretext for the author; it is no more than a man of straw; and it is to modern societies and to France as much as to America that he is speaking. His thesis is the effects and dangers of equality in all conditions and civic relations within a democratic society. It is here that one feels the inferior manner on comparing it with Montesquieu. The author lacks examples to illustrate or animate his pages.

But Mill, eminent thinker that he was, understood its full relevance: to him it was "the first philosophical book ever written on Democracy as it manifests itself in modern society; a book, the essential doctrines of which it is not likely that any future generations will subvert, to whatever degree they may modify them; while its spirit, and the general mode in which it treats its subject, constitute the beginning of a new era in the scientific study of politics."

It is evident that the concluding part of the *Democracy* was received in France with respect but not enthusiasm. Tocqueville himself makes some revealing observations on this point:

The success of this second part of the *Democracy* was a less popular one in France than that of the first. . . . I am therefore very preoccupied with searching into myself, as to what error I have fallen subject, for it is



probable that there is a considerable one. I believe that the fault I seek is to be found in the very basis of the book, which expresses something obscure and problematic that does not move the mass. When I spoke only of democratic society in the United States it was immediately understood. If I had spoken of our democratic society in France, as it shows itself in our day, this would also be well understood. But on leaving the ideas which American and French society presented me, *I wished to set out the general tendencies of democratic societies of which no complete example yet exists.*

Tocqueville had entered active politics in 1839. He remained in politics until the coup d'état of Louis-Napoleon in December 1851—when he became a political refugee in his own country. From then onward his second great published book matured: *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*. Looking back on his career as active politician and political thinker, he wrote to Gustave de Beaumont in a letter from Sorrento on January 10, 1851:

You know, for a long time I have been preoccupied with the idea of undertaking a new book. I have thought a hundred times that if I am to leave some traces of myself in this world it would be far more by what I have written than by what I have done. Moreover, I feel far more in a state to produce a book today than I did fifteen years ago. I have therefore set myself to seeking a subject while traveling about the mountains of Sorrento. I need a contemporary one and one which allows me to mix facts with ideas, the philosophy of history with history itself.

But we should perhaps look at another document, which implements this letter; Tocqueville wrote in a letter to Kergorlay:

In reality it is only the things of our times which interest the public and myself. The grandeur and singularity of the spectacle presented by the world of our day absorbs the attention too much for us to be able to attach much importance to those historical curiosities which are sufficient for idle and erudite societies. What contemporary subject should I choose? The one with the most singularity and that is most fitting to the nature and practice of my mind would be a collection of reflections and estimates of the present time, a free judgment of our modern societies and a forecast of their probable future. But when I come to seek out the main point of such a subject, the point where all the ideas to which it gives rise, meet and join . . . I do not find it. I see the parts of such a work, but do not perceive a totality; I have the threads but lack the woof



and the web to make the cloth. I need to find a solid and continuous base of facts somewhere. I can only come across this by writing history, in fixing on a period the narration of which gives me opportunity to portray men and things of our century and to allow me to make one picture out of these separate ones. Only the long drama of the French Revolution could provide me with such a period.

By 1848, Tocqueville's reputation as a political theorist was so firmly established that his share in the deliberations of the constitutional commission, and later, in the ill-fated discussion about the constitutional revision in 1851, was a foregone conclusion. During the years prior to the Third Republic, Tocqueville's rank as a political theorist became ever more marked. As Joseph Barthélémy writes in his *Traité du droit constitutionnel*: "The political education of the generation that produced the Constitution of 1875 was based a little on Proudhon, a great deal on the *Democracy in America*, and lastly and above all on the works . . . of De Broglie and Prévost-Paradol." The two latter men are deeply imbued with Tocquevillian ideas. Paul Janet in his two-volume work *Histoire de la science politique* and also in other writings has given Tocqueville a firm place in the history of nineteenth-century political thought. He writes:

Tocqueville had a different view from the liberal school which called the despotism of democracy the brutal and savage government of the masses. Tocqueville had in mind another kind of despotism, not that of militant democracy, led by a force of abominable violence and at the same time showing a savage greatness. No, he believed that he saw democracy at rest, leveling and successively lowering all individuals, entering into all interests, imposing uniform and minute rules on all, treating men as abstractions, subjecting society to a mechanical movement, and at last coming to rest in the unlimited power of one.

Whether or not those Frenchmen who framed the Constitution of the Fourth Republic went back to Alexis de Tocqueville seems to me doubtful. By 1945 Tocqueville's political heritage had spent itself in France. Political philosophy did not fit into generalized and empty party vocabularies. Moreover, by then the Mass Age was in full swing; the French were stirred by political imagery and no



longer by clear thought and sober observation. As for the Fifth Republic, it is perhaps possible that certain Tocquevillian ideas have reached Charles de Gaulle or Michel Debré in a roundabout way. The strong conservative element in the Constitution of the Fifth Republic may have links with the traditions of French Catholic political thought. I am thinking of Albert de Mun and De la Tour du Pin, who themselves were influenced by Frédéric Le Play. Le Play regarded the influence of the *Democracy in America* as *néfaste*. But such a strong opposition as Le Play expresses to Tocqueville in this respect is also an influence, though a negative one; and as such perhaps not less important.

Tocqueville's influence in France as author of *The Old Regime* is, of course, much easier to trace. Fustel de Coulanges, Albert Sorel, and above all Taine, not to mention many others, were all deeply familiar with Tocqueville's work. Taine is perhaps nearest to him, but Taine's positivist conception of history and his lack of comprehension of legal and administrative history removes him further from Tocqueville than the author of *La Cité antique*. In any case, to regard Tocqueville as a historian in the narrow and technical sense of the word, as was and perhaps still is the habit in France—at least until the new emphasis on his importance as a political sociologist—is in my opinion a great mistake. Tocqueville was never interested in the *Wie es gewesen*; he was not a storyteller; he wanted to understand the why and the whence, and the structure of the historic process—our share in it, our future. It took nearly fifty years until Wilhelm Dilthey, in a lecture to the Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften, condensed the essence of Tocqueville's contribution to history and sociology in one classic page:

The third of the original minds of Ranke's time was Tocqueville. He is the analyst among the historical scholars of that time and indeed the greatest analyst of the political world since Machiavelli and Aristotle. While Ranke and his school exploited the archives with minute exactitude in order to comprehend the web of diplomatic actions which enmeshes the whole of Europe in modern times, Tocqueville employed the archives for a new purpose, when he sought in them the state of things as they really are, which is significant for the understanding of the inner political

structure of nations. His analysis is aimed at the interaction of functions in a modern political body, and he was the first to use each part of political life which has remained in literature, archives, and life itself for the study of these inner and permanent structures with the minuteness and precision of a dissecting anatomist. He gave the first real analysis of American democracy. The knowledge that in it the movement, "the continual irresistible tendency" consists in bringing about a democratic order in all states; this he concluded from the development of society in many different countries. Since then this has been confirmed by events in all parts of the world. As a true historical and political mind he sees in this tendency of society neither progress nor something harmful. The art of politics must reckon with it and must adapt each country to the adequate political order of the direction of society. In his other book Tocqueville was the first to penetrate into the real political structure of France in the eighteenth century and during the Revolution. Such a political science could also apply to political practice. His further development of the Aristotelian thesis, that the sane constitution of each state rests on the right relationship of duties and rights and that the unbalancing of this relationship, which would change rights into privileges, must bring about the decomposition of a sound constitution, was

John Stuart Mill (1806-1873). (*N.Y. Public Library.*)



particularly fertile. Another significant application of his analysis to practice lay in the knowledge of the dangers of an exaggerated centralization and in his insight into the beginnings of self-activity and self-government. Thus he arrived at fertile generalizations from history itself and thereby developed from a new analysis of past realities a new and more thorough relationship to our present reality.

Tocqueville as a sociologist, that is to say, a thinker concerned with the totality of the historical process of society, and the place of the individual within this process, remains in France to this day largely unknown. No doubt Durkheim, Tarde, or Bouglé had read Tocqueville, as references in their works show, but he left no deeper trace. If we turn now for a moment to Germany and examine the great Frenchman's influence in the same fields, political science, political practice, history, and sociology, the following observations may be tentatively put forward. Anyone who examines the deliberations of the Frankfurter Nationalversammlung of 1849 will find that Tocqueville's conception of federalism as "divided sovereignty" played an important role in the Assembly's discussions. Through the mediation of Georg Waitz, in particular his *Grundzüge der Politik*, published in 1862, Tocqueville's theory of sovereignty became the fundamental maxim of German and Swiss federal ideas until a new doctrine, the doctrine of *Herrschaft*, took its place. Through Christian Karl Bunsen, a friend and correspondent of Tocqueville, through Robert von Mohl, the learned author of *Literatur und Geschichte der Staatswissenschaften*, Droysen, Bluntschli, Theodor Perthes, and many others, Tocqueville's political philosophy became familiar to the '48 generation of German politicians. *The Old Regime* was twice translated into German. I have shown elsewhere that Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's husband, and Stockmar were among its early readers and admirers; and there can be no doubt that the great Ranke himself had studied Tocqueville's most mature work. (Incidentally, a detailed study of the relation of Ranke and Tocqueville would certainly be a worthwhile enterprise.) Through Karl Hillebrand, Jacob Burckhardt, and Dilthey, Tocqueville's sociology of history reached our time.

In Burckhardt's *Historical Fragments* we find well-founded evidence that Burckhardt had read Tocqueville's *Old Regime*. How near Burckhardt stands to Tocqueville may be seen from Burckhardt's view that the period from 1789 to his own time and the absolutely unmistakable tendencies of the future are one unified process. We need only quote a few lines from Burckhardt's *Reflections on History* to further illustrate his nearness to Tocqueville:

Every period up to the present day is fundamentally a revolutionary period and we ourselves perform the second act. For those three seemingly peaceful decades from 1815 to 1848 can now be seen to be a mere entr'acte in the great drama. However, there now appears to be a tendency towards the *unification* of the movement, which is in contrast to anything in the recorded past of the world.

The idea of the concentration of power in the centralized *Machtstaat* became a cornerstone in Burckhardt's conception of modern history. Yet however close was the agreement of the two thinkers, their personal attitude was fundamentally different. Whereas Tocqueville always sought means of making the contemporary and the future political framework bearable to the individual's spiritual needs, the great Swiss historian renounced any share in a state he held to be already degenerated. Like Epicurus, he enjoyed the perfect contemplation of the perennial beauty of art which he took as a symbol of the unattainable.

I have mentioned the impact of Tocqueville's thought on John Stuart Mill. Mill writes in his *Autobiography*:

M. de Tocqueville's "Democracy in America" . . . fell into my hands immediately after its first appearance. In that remarkable work, the excellences of democracy were pointed out in a more conclusive, because a more specific manner than I have ever known them to be, even by the most enthusiastic democrats; while the specific dangers which beset democracy, considered as the government of the numerical majority were brought into equally strong light, and subjected to a masterly analysis, not as reasons for resisting what the author considered as an inevitable result of human progress, but as indications of the weak points of popular government, the defences by which it needs to be guarded, and the correctives which must be added to it in order that while full play is

given to its beneficial tendencies, those which are of a different nature may be neutralized or mitigated. . . .

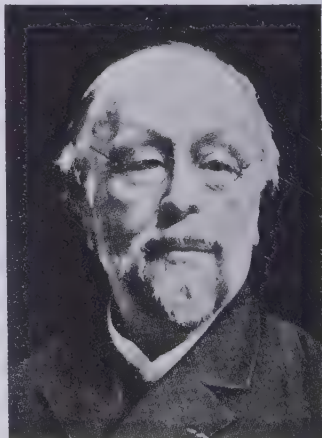
A collateral subject on which I also derived great benefit from the study of Tocqueville, was the fundamental question of centralization. The powerful philosophic analysis which he applied to American and to French experience, led him to attach the utmost importance to the performance of as much of the collective business of society, as can safely be so performed, by the people themselves, without any intervention of the executive government, either to supercede their agency, or to dictate the manner of its exercise. He viewed this practical political activity of the individual citizen, not only as one of the most effectual means of training the social feelings and practical intelligence of the people . . . but also as the specific counteractive to some of the characteristic infirmities of democracy, and a necessary protection against its degenerating into the only despotism of which, in the modern world, there is real danger—the absolute rule of the head of the executive over a congregation of isolated individuals, all equals but all slaves. . . . I was . . . actively engaged in defending important measures . . . against an irrational clamor grounded on the anti-centralization prejudice; and had it not been for the lessons of Tocqueville, I do not know that I might not have been hurried into the excess opposite to that which . . . it was generally my business to combat.

Nor should we forget that Acton's writings reveal deep familiarity with Tocqueville's ideas. "I have just seen," writes Acton in a letter of November 8, 1861,

Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve (1804–1869). (*Bettmann Archive*.)



Hippolyte Adolphe Taine (1828–1893). Painting by Bonnat. (*Bettmann Archive*.)

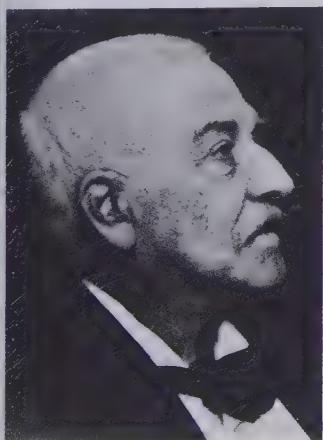


the English edition of the life of Tocqueville, which is fuller than the French. . . . To describe what formed his mind and how it grew in power and how it developed in its views from American democracy to his last work, in which he stands in opposition to modern popular ideas far more than at first sight people suppose. Then to compare him to other Frenchmen—to show the very distinct limits and the very broad gaps of his genius and of his knowledge—how he occupies nearly the position of Burke to his own countrymen, minus the greatness and vastness of the other's mind, but plus much colder observation.

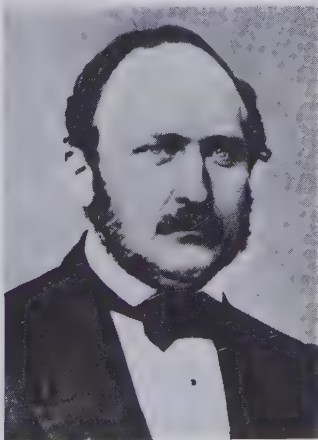
A few days later Acton returns to the same subject in another letter:

You say very rightly that he [Tocqueville] was no historian, though he wrote the best book on a great historical event, because he could not see things in the flow *im Werden*, as the Germans say, but was a great observer of what is actual or constant, like the dealers in physical science. Is not the great delusion of his America the belief in the irresistible progress of democracy to predominance through all history? In reality democracy is a part, one of the three (or four) elements in the State, which in early undeveloped societies has no place at all, which it is the business of history to raise to its proper level and proportion, and the effort of the revolution to make sole and supreme. The solution is in self-government with indifference of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy, all which Plato and Aristotle very well knew. His picture of America is perfectly accurate, not simply by supererogation, but because his powers

Jacob Burckhardt (1818–1897).
(*Bettmann Archive.*)



Prince Albert (1819–1861).
(*Bettmann Archive.*)

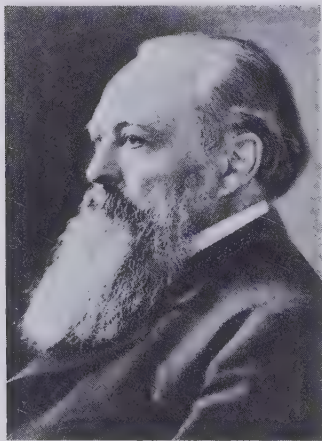


of observing were far beyond his powers of reasoning. . . . Observe that America has not solved the problem of reconciling democracy with freedom, for it has not reconciled power with law, or will with duty, which is the moral aspect of the same thing. . . . As to his originality he is nearly right. *Research* should be original; but a man who disdains what others have said goes wrong or ends by saying what others have said without knowing it. In his *America* he does knowingly say much that others had discovered before him, without acknowledgement. In my American article I quoted Story's complaint to that effect. There is a fallacy in his notion of liberty as compared to religion. Liberty is not a gift, but an acquisition; not a state of rest, but of effort and of growth; not a starting point, but a result of government; or at least a starting point only as an object—not a *datum*, but an aim. Just as the regular movements of the heavenly bodies produce the music of the spheres, liberty is the result of the principle *suum cuique* in action.

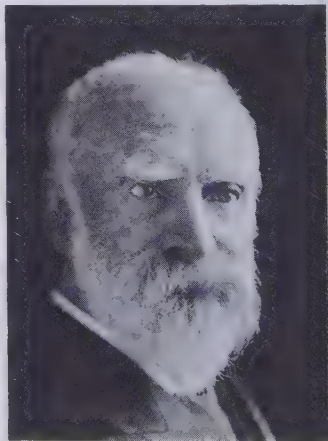
One must concede to Acton that he could criticize Tocqueville as an equal.

Through Mill, Tocqueville's heritage was transmitted to Bryce, Dicey, and Laski. Bryce regarded Tocqueville, so it seems to me at least, too much as a technician of statecraft. His well-known lecture "The Predictions of Hamilton and de Tocqueville" is particularly revealing in this respect. Bryce, like Sainte-Beuve, did not really understand the

Lord Acton (1834–1902).
(*Bettmann Archive.*)



James Bryce (1838–1922).
(*N.Y. Public Library.*)



significance of the last two volumes of the *Democracy*. He writes:

[Tocqueville] soars far from the ground and is often lost in the clouds of his own sombre meditation. When this part was written the direct impressions of his transatlantic visit had begun to fade from his mind. With all his finesse and fertility, he had neither sufficient profundity of thought nor a sufficiently ample store of facts gathered from history at large to enable him to give body and substance to his reflections on the obscure problems with which he attempts to deal.

Not even Laski, however great his admiration for Tocqueville was, has grasped the universal character of Tocquevilian thought; he saw him perhaps too much through the glasses of party doctrine, an attitude common to his generation. Dicey, however, the influential author of *The Law of the Constitution*, unmistakably sensed Tocqueville's greatness. In this book he accepted the Frenchman's thesis of the absence of administrative law in the British constitutional structure, a thesis which must, however, be abandoned today. In his lectures on *Law and Opinion in England* he notes the influence of Tocqueville's political thought. "The word Democracy," Dicey writes there, "has, owing in great measure to the popularity and influence of Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, acquired a new ambiguity. It may mean either a social condition or a form of government." In a little-known essay on Tocqueville which deserves to be reprinted, Dicey attempted to evaluate Tocqueville's permanent place in the history of political thought:

Will Alexis de Tocqueville take his place among the writers whose works are true classics. Will he stand in the records of French literature near, or by the side of, Montesquieu?

Some thirty or thirty-five years ago even to ask this question would have savoured of intellectual blasphemy. Tocqueville's rank among French thinkers and men of letters had before 1860 obtained general recognition. Mill, Grote, Senior, Greg, all the men, in short, who then guided the educated opinion of England, had proclaimed Tocqueville's eminence. He was canonized in his lifetime. Unfortunately, the fame of the thinkers to whom Tocqueville was an oracle is itself for the moment under a kind of cloud. The reputation of some of them is dead. Mill himself, whose writings in 1860 formed the intellectual food of the ablest

young men of the day, is not a power among the youth of 1893. . . . Montesquieu, with whom Tocqueville has so many affinities, exercised in 1750 a kind of intellectual supremacy which had passed away by the end of the 18th century. Where are now the avowed disciples of Voltaire or Rousseau? Tocqueville in 1860 was the spokesman of educated thought; in 1893 he represents a past state of opinion. What, therefore, we may ask, will be his permanent repute? In such matters nothing is decisive but the judgment of time. What that judgment will be no one dare dogmatically predict. Among the disciples of Godwin were some of the ablest men of their time; they believed him to be the greatest of political philosophers. If any of them could return to the world he would be surprised to discover that Godwin's *Political Justice*, which in 1793 aroused the opposition or admiration of thousands, is in 1893 read by no one. We must bear in mind then, that the fortune of books is as unpredictable as the fortune of men. Still, it is possible to give reasons for the belief that Tocqueville's fame will be permanent. No recent writer on the philosophy of politics who is read by Englishmen can stand comparison with him for a moment. *La Démocratie en Amérique*, as a picture of modern America, would in any case be out of date; Bryce's *American Commonwealth* is now the only book worth consulting as a source of information about American institutions. But Tocqueville's work, as I have intimated, was in reality a treatise, not on the government of the United States, but on the characteristics of modern democracy. Looked at in this light, it contains stores of wisdom which even yet the world has not fully appropriated. Taine's knowledge, again, of the *ancien régime* exceeds that of his master; but Taine's writings, as regards France before the Revolution, are nothing but studies in the school of Tocqueville. They are admirable studies; they abound in information confirmatory of Tocqueville's speculations; but Tocqueville, after all, is the teacher. Taine supplies an inventory (so to speak) of the facts which, taken together, make up the *Ancien régime*. Tocqueville shows what the facts mean. There is not a thought in Taine's account of society before the outbreak of the Revolution which is not suggested by Tocqueville. When, of necessity, Taine in his later volumes parts from his teacher, he has visibly lost his intellectual guide. The number of facts collected by the industry of Taine impresses the imagination; but, for want of Tocqueville's lucid criticism, we do not feel assured that we understand their true significance.

My observations are selective. I have said nothing on Tocqueville's influence in Italy from Gioberti to Croce and nothing of his influence in Russia from Alexander Herzen through Tolstoy and perhaps to Pasternak.

Our present, if I am not mistaken, is evolving an adequate conception of Alexis de Tocqueville as universal sociologist. Max Weber repeated his questions on a historically more



Max Weber (1864–1920). Painting by Otto Neumann. (*Bettmann Archive.*)

advanced level. Through Karl Jaspers and the Swiss historian Carl Burckhardt, Tocqueville's life-work has again been brought near to the present generation. And through David Riesman's work American sociology has become, or is becoming, part and parcel of Tocqueville's influence on the contemporary European mind; I believe that no other recent American sociological work has such deep affinities with Tocqueville's thought.

Perhaps Americans are becoming more European than we are. If that should be so, if nonconformism is growing here, it would indicate a late vindication of Tocqueville's philosophy which he himself could not anticipate—morose and lonely as he was—as all really great minds are.

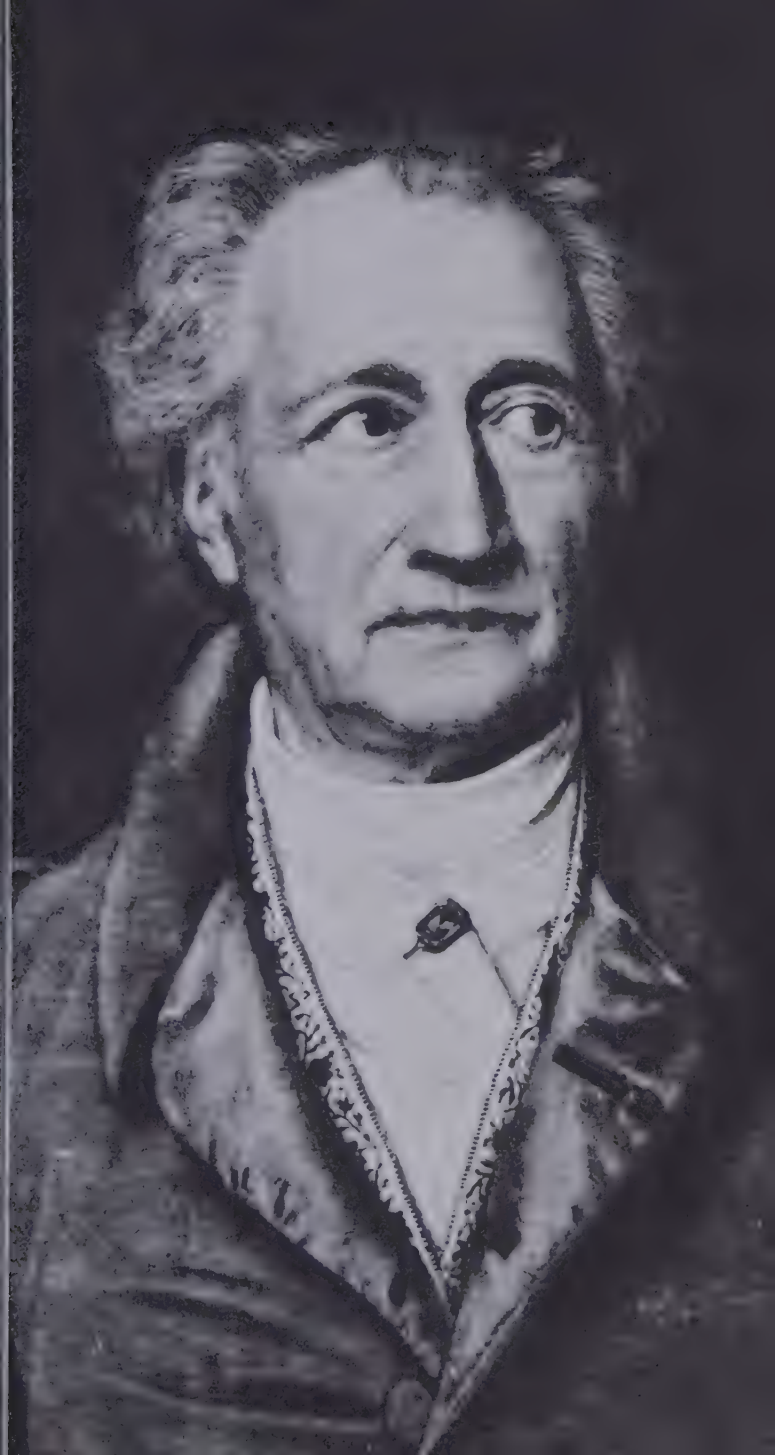
The Political Consequences of the Unpolitical German*

Fritz Stern

For many decades, the course of German politics has puzzled and, at times, terrified the nations of the Western world. How could the Germans, a people of such intellectual eminence and moral intent, endure the blundering authoritarianism of the Empire, the divisiveness of Weimar, the tyranny of Hitler? Why was Germany without a stable political tradition, why had it failed to adopt successfully the political institutions that had become the norms of Western political culture? A frequent answer was that there were two Germanies, the Germany of the educated citizenry, peaceful and potentially democratic, and the official, aggressive Germany, governed by a handful of men. The classic expression of this faith in the other Germany was Wilson's refusal, in October 1918, to deal with the Kaiser's government; he would deal with a democratic Germany or none at all. This idea of the two Germanies—the majority held captive by a small minority—dominated Western historical thinking as well. It encouraged historians to hunt

• An earlier version of this essay, written at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Stanford, was read at the Pacific Branch meeting of the American Historical Association in December 1957.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832). The classical portrait by Stieler. (*Bettmann Archive*.)



up villains, to fasten on specific groups or minority interests that may have inhibited Germany's natural bent toward the West.

This view presupposed a far sharper division within Germany than in fact existed; it overlooked the many ways in which the German elite had accommodated itself to its political nonage and had benefited from it. Before 1918 and after 1933, the German *Bürger* did not feel thwarted or enchained; they thought themselves free. Their acquiescence in different political regimes suggests that there was but one Germany, in which the different forces were inextricably mingled. To gain the proper perspective on this Germany the historian must examine German society not at points of obvious divergence or extremity—such as Nazi Germany—but in periods of apparent normality and quietude. Nor should he concentrate exclusively on some tenacious groups—such as the German army or the much-maligned Junkers. It is not the “bad Germans” that are unique—every Western nation has had its reactionary die-hards, its racists and hypernationalists, its imperialists and fascists—but the “good Germans,” the several generations of peaceful and splendidly educated, seemingly Western men. It is to them, to their worship of culture and their depreciation of politics, to their sentiments and ideals, that I shall want to turn.

For a century or more the German term “*Kultur*” had a reverential connotation that the simple English word “culture” cannot render. It was invested with the awe and reverence that Germans felt, or thought they should feel, for the diverse creations of the spirit, for the mystery of the arts that to so many possessed a voice as tender and as powerful as religion itself. This idealization of culture inspired and guided the great intellectual and scientific achievements of modern Germany; German learning had a great influence on the life of other peoples—as American universities so clearly exemplify. But the ideal of culture, once embodied in institutions, became more and more a passive appreciation of past creativity, and in time it

degenerated into little more than the ritualistic repetition of phrases and pieties. Far more important than the decline was the impact that this veneration of culture had on German society, on politics, religion, and on what may be called the national self-image. As I will try to show, it fostered several political prejudices and positions, none favorable to the development of a democratic society or even to the growth of a cohesive nation. It hastened the rapid and peculiar secularization of Protestant Germany and served as a rationalization for a good deal of political and social irresponsibility and iniquity. There is pathos in the fact that the Germans used their greatest achievement, their culture, to augment and excuse their greatest failure, their politics.

The exaltation of culture, the veneration and perfection of learning, had its origins in German Idealism, that extraordinary outburst of artistic and intellectual creativity from 1770 to 1830. Diverse, even antithetical, though the several strands of German Idealism were—*Sturm und Drang*, classicism, romanticism, and idealistic philosophy proper—together they formed the intellectual basis of modern German society. Germany's cultural awakening coincided with the democratic revolution of the Western world; the Revolution overwhelmed Germany in its most inexorable and ruthless guise, in Napoleon, and it is no wonder that German Idealism, which had earlier been in such close dependence on the West, in time absorbed a sharp anti-Western and anti-French strain. It has been said that Idealism was Germany's equivalent of the French Revolution, and in some ways at least, Idealism did become a substitute for and a defense against the Revolution. German nationalism, inflamed by Napoleon's triumphs, turned against the political ideals and achievements of the French Revolution. What was exalted by German nationalism was the cultural achievement and destiny of the Germans, their peculiar gifts for poetry, truth, and music. Consequently German nationalism was less concerned with the political destiny of the Germans, with their practical rights and liberties as citizens.

I shall not analyze Idealist philosophy nor trace the impact of specific ideas or philosophic systems on German thought, in the manner, say, of John Dewey's *German Philosophy and Politics*, or of other polemical essays in intellectual history. I am concerned with the effect of Idealism on a level below that of formal philosophy and pure ideas. The German *Bürger*, however superbly educated, did not grapple with the precise ideas of Kant or Hegel or even Goethe, but some of the ideas, condensed into a few pat phrases, did mold and perpetuate a vague, elusive, but important *Lebensgefühl*, a cultural stance, a style of life. It is with the political consequences of these elusive attitudes, with the intellectual or aesthetic presuppositions of politics rarely articulated because so habitual and common, that I want to deal.

Historians have seldom studied this layer of German culture, partly, no doubt, because they took at face value the historical cliché that the German *Bürger* was unpolitical, hence, for the political historian, an object of pity, not of study. Yet the allegedly unpolitical stance of a highly influential class with strong cultural prejudices deserves the closest scrutiny; in it one may find an obstinate condition of Germany's political failure. The self-consciously unpolitical strain in German life has had a profound, and on the whole, an injurious impact on German politics.

It was not accidental that Prussia began its intense institutional concern with culture—the establishment of new universities and the improvement of old ones—at the time of its unprecedented humiliation at the hands of Napoleon. “The State,” said Frederick William III, “must replace by spiritual forces what it lost in material strength.” Here was the characteristic confusion of spirit and power, and the inchoate assumption that culture could substitute for power. From then on the moral indispensability of education became an article of faith: the self-fulfillment of the individual required the humanistic cultivation of the mind. Under Wilhelm von Humboldt, the Prussian school system was reformed, the ideal of a general education—*allgemeine Bildung*—was embodied, perhaps imprisoned, in those bastions of learning, the German *gymnasia*.

This educational system, with its recruitment and rewards, its gradations and pretensions, was of singular importance in a society that was still far from open, in a society where Guizot's "*enrichissez-vous*" would have been a senseless admonition. Intellectually, the schools sought to prepare the universal man, but not the public-minded citizen; here students gathered their knowledge of the classics, of Christianity, of the Enlightenment, and of Idealism—knowledge often mechanically acquired, but all precious and all conspicuously displayed. The earnest belief in the indispensability of this kind of intellectual and aesthetic education was given practical value as well: the rewards of higher education were enormous and in an economically backward society they continued to be the most important means of climbing the social ladder. An academic degree was a prerequisite for most positions of status and prestige, and in the early nineteenth century the academician or civil servant of humble origin was by no means exceptional. Higher education, moreover, granted the student partial exemption from military service—no mean incentive to culture.

This exaltation of culture had a still more penetrating effect on German society: for the educated classes, especially in Protestant Germany, it brought about the gradual secularization of religion through culture, the substitution in a sense of one for the other. This process, obviously so comprehensive and complex that I can do no more than hint at it, involved the approximation of religion, more accurately of Protestantism, to culture and metaphysics, by stripping religion of the supernatural and the mysterious, of sin and redemption, reducing it to an ethical essence, to a universal core that was immune to higher biblical criticism. It involved as well the elevation of the aesthetic and intellectual aspects of culture, of philosophy, literature,

• The austere intellectualism of the schools and the authoritarianism of the teachers, the remoteness from the workaday world, the absence of sports, helped to mold the typical scholar of the nineteenth century; but at times these also led to sudden outbreaks of youthful irrationalism and anti-intellectualism, of which the Youth Movement before 1914 was the most famous example.



Hegel lecturing. (Bettmann Archive.)

and art, to be the supreme revelations of the human spirit, and the substitution of the moral commands of German Idealism, of Kant in particular, for older universal and religious commands. The *reductio ad absurdum* of this culture-worship must surely have been the proposal of one German historian that the works of Goethe should be added to the other books of Divine Revelation.

With this veneration of culture there emerged another ideal, a universally accepted tenet of Idealism that persisted as the talisman of the educated classes: the belief in the perfectibility of the aesthetic or rational faculties of the individual, quite independently of political conditions. The inner freedom that Luther preached became secularized, but the state itself, while it must not actively inhibit the pursuit of knowledge, could do little to infringe on the highest good, the unfolding of the personality. To be sure, there were important variations of this belief: the Kantians had a very different sense of the individual's self-fulfillment from the Romantics or from those who cherished Goethe's and Schiller's image of the *Genie*—of the daemonic, asocial genius who in a different guise appears in Hegel's irresistible world-historical figure. This admiration of the self-fulfillment of the individual, in the strictly private sphere, through learning but without good works, proved yet another link between Protestantism and German Idealism. It was in Schleiermacher that the two strains most clearly mingled, and after him this essentially humanistic belief was wrapped in a religious mystique as well. The cultured man, by and large, ceased to be a church man, and his so-called religion of Idealism contributed, as the great Catholic historian Franz Schnabel points out, to the utter secularization of the academically trained classes in Protestant Germany. •

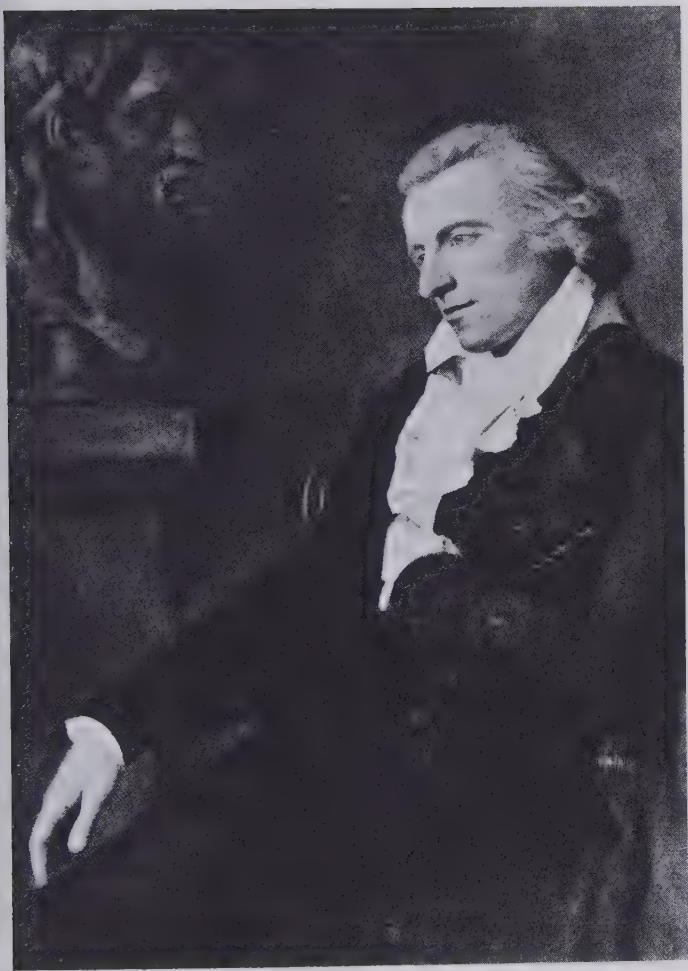
This type of individualism had nothing egalitarian about it; here was not the Christian belief in the equality of souls

• It is significant that in the nineteenth century the formally Protestant groups played the pre-eminent role in German intellectual life, even as the Protestant Church steadily declined. Catholicism, on the other hand, had less impact on intellectual life, and suffered less from the loss of faith in the last century.

and sinners nor the beneficial abstraction about a natural man who was created equal "and endowed with inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." This individualism had a distinct aesthetic-aristocratic bent and could, indeed quickly did, degenerate into a cult of the personality. Only the exceptional individual, the great personality, could attain the self-fulfillment, the self-mastery that Idealism prescribed.

This veneration of culture and personality, which became one of the principal pieties of nineteenth-century Germany, was neither exclusively German nor in itself culpable. The man of culture has often disdained the grubbiness of politics, has usually been remote from the lower classes. But a difference persisted, a difference well brought out in Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*, a book which one would expect to be closely akin to the German ideal. "Culture has one great passion, the passion for sweetness and light. It has one even yet greater! The passion for making them prevail . . . and it knows that the sweetness and light of the few must be imperfect until the raw and unkindled masses of humanity are touched with sweetness and light." The German academically trained person lacked the passion to make it prevail. • He often felt that the passive enjoyment of culture sufficed, that culture could be tended in almost any society and, finally, that almost any

• In 1867, young William James met and reported on this strange, admirable being, the German professor. (It was Wilhelm Dilthey whom he so described, a man far less remote from reality than most of his colleagues.) "He is the first man I have ever met of a class, which must be common here, of men to whom learning has become as natural as breathing. A learned man at home is in a measure isolated; his study is carried on in private, at reserved hours. To the public he appears as a citizen and neighbor, etc., and they know at most *about* him that he is addicted to this or that study; his intellectual occupation always has something of a put-on character, and remains external at least to some part of his being. Whereas this cuss seemed to me to be nothing if not a professor . . . as if he were able to stand towards the rest of society *merely* in the relation of a man learned in this or that branch—and never for a moment forget the interests or put off the instincts of his specialty. If he should meet people or circumstances that could in no measure be dealt with on that ground, he would pass on and ignore them, instead of being obliged, like an American, to sink for the time the specialty." (*The Letters of William James*, Vol. I, pp. 110-11.)



Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller (1759-1805). Painting by Ludovika von Simanowitz, 1793. (*Bettmann Archive.*)

regime or social injustice could be rationalized or glorified, by reference to German culture. It was not only that spirit and politics were divorced, as the Germans have always maintained, half proudly and half regretfully; it is that spirit often became a cloak for the politics of callousness and irresponsibility. •

To be sure, in the early nineteenth century this veneration of culture and personality coincided with the dominant political aspiration. In Humboldt's mind and time this *Humanitätsideal* served as a spur to the creation of a liberal society. Indeed, in the pre-1848 movement, most academics sought to translate the inner freedom of man into external freedom as well, and the liberals of those days fought the Establishment, the court, the nobility, and the church as obscurantist or tyrannical institutions that inhibited the growth of the free individual. However diverse the liberals' programs, they all demanded the legal freedom of the person, i.e., his protection from every form of public arbitrariness, his liberation from economic and social disabilities, and his spiritual freedom, i.e., his right to hold, exchange, and propagate dissenting beliefs. It was only regarding the capstone of the free society—the right to self-government, the erection, in other words, of a representative or parliamentary system, that intellectual opinion was divided, and here I would suggest that the drive to

• It is noteworthy that Germans have traditionally exalted those self-images that attested their nonpolitical, or individualistic, nature. The much-revered image of Tacitus' primitive German, that self-reliant, robust, and incorruptible barbarian, fighting against the decadent and overcivilized Romans, hardly fostered the political virtues. In the sixteenth century the legend of the German *Michel* or of the *Dummer Michel*, the clumsy, charitable boor, sprang up, and by the nineteenth century the stupid *Michel* was widely and fondly caricatured as the typical German "with his excessive benevolence and political immaturity." Again, the revival of the Siegfried myth: the unsuspecting, naive hero cut down by the scheming villainous Hagen. The Germans have ever doubted their political capacities, and their outstanding rulers, from Frederick II to Hitler, and perhaps beyond, have rarely troubled to disguise their contempt for their people's political sense. The German pantheon, resplendent with poets, thinkers, and warriors contain few, if any, statesmen—a consequence of Germany's political history.

self-government was blunted by the prevalent depreciation of political life.*

It was in the decisive decades between the failure of 1848 and the national successes of Bismarck that the political implications of unpolitical Idealism emerged more clearly. For it was in those decades of quickened political life that several strains of German liberalism capitulated before Bismarck and his national goals, in effect abandoned, or indefinitely postponed, the demands for political self-government. But it was the way in which they renounced their ideals that indicates the critical importance of the Idea of Culture. When, in 1864, the German liberals lost heart in their own course, which for once had massive popular strength behind it, they neither accepted nor rejected Bismarck's practical dictum, that blood and iron must decide the great questions of the day; they were not content to say that this was a necessary sacrifice for the fulfillment of higher national goals. Rather, they repudiated politics altogether, and asserted that politics—as the then novel term "*Realpolitik*" implied—was necessarily divorced from the realm of ideals and morals, that spirit and power were distinct, though not necessarily antithetical.

Hermann Baumgarten, a liberal historian and Max Weber's uncle, became the leading apologist of this retreat from politics: "The *Bürger* is meant to work, not to rule, and a statesman's primary task is to rule." Referring specifi-

*The political views of liberalism have recently been analyzed in Leonard Krieger's masterly work, *The German Idea of Freedom: A History of a Political Tradition*. Beginning with the Old Regime and concentrating on the major figures of German liberalism, he traces the peculiar doctrinal development of German liberalism, the continuing efforts to associate the idea of freedom with existing political institutions, to render compatible freedom and the authoritarian state. During the nineteenth century, in the mind of the educated man, this idea of freedom became qualified, I think, by the ideal of culture, which transcended the political divisions, and permeated liberals as well as conservatives, making the former more conservative and the latter more self-righteous. Although most bibliographical references are omitted from this essay, I want to call the reader's attention to Hajo Holborn's article, "*Der deutsche Idealismus in sozialgeschichtlicher Beleuchtung*," which is central to this theme and from which I learned a great deal. (*Historische Zeitschrift*, October 1952, pp. 359-84.)

cally to the *Bürger's* heritage of Idealism, he concluded that in one sense he was too good for politics and in another not good enough. What better example of this than the immediate past: "We have had the unprecedented experience that our victory would have been a disaster while our defeat has been an immense blessing." Bismarck had to be accepted, for he was the master of the practical realm, and in that acceptance emerged fullblown the unpo-

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831). (*Bettmann Archive.*)



litical German, the good German who would tolerate and acquiesce in political imperfection, even turpitude, as long as his escape into Idealism was not blocked by the public authority of the state. They were willing to render unto Caesar what was Caesar's and unto Culture what was Culture's.

But some liberals were not content with the retreat from politics, this escape to Idealism. Treitschke, for example, took quite a different position; far from retreating to culture, he provided Bismarck's *Realpolitik* with a spiritual justification, a moral veneer. The decline of Protestantism and the exaltation of culture had gone hand in hand; Treitschke, born into an austere Protestant family, gradually embraced the religion of Idealism, and invested Bismarck's new state with the same passion and absolute moral righteousness that previously had belonged to religion. • What Treitschke did rhapsodically, thousands of Germans, organized in the National Liberal Party, did prosaically: they idealized, in Max Weber's phrase, they ethicized, Bismarck's achievement of power. Some eighty years later, Friedrich Meinecke said of the liberal transformation of this period: "Specifically German . . . was the tendency to elevate something primarily practical into a universal world-view theory."

The new Empire was intensely practical. The quaint and quiet nation of poets and thinkers survived only in the nostalgia of the educated classes. After 1871, the material conditions of Germany, though not her politics nor her spirit, rapidly approximated those of the West. For centuries politically divided, Germany was now a nation state, as were her western neighbors; for centuries economically backward, Germany, in her first economic miracle, bounded ahead, surpassed France, challenged Britain, and became the leading industrial nation of the continent; for centuries a weak state, she now became a great military power, a power that by its existence in the heart of Europe posed a threat to Europe. How prophetic was the British M.P.

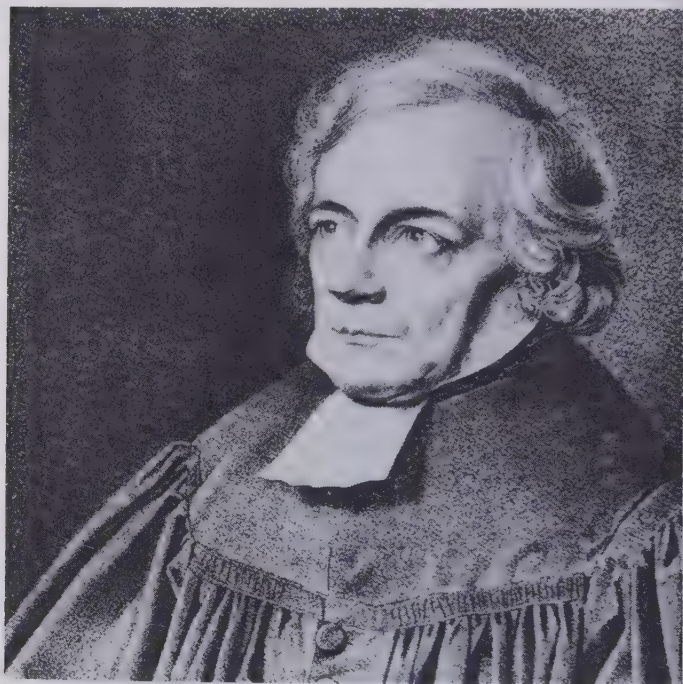
• For Treitschke the state was "the most supremely real person, in the literal sense of the word, that exists." For a worshipper of personality, this Hegelian identification meant a still higher aesthetic value for the state.

who, after the battle of Sedan, said: "Europe has lost a mistress and gained a master." But the master's house was divided against itself. Bismarck's semi-absolutistic regime, with its democratic appearances and feudal reality, postponed and embittered the conflict between the aspirations of the democratic forces and the privileges of the nobility and its newly won allies, the captains of industry. Bismarck's political system intensified the class antagonisms, and the newly united nation became socially more divided.

The response of the academic classes to the new Germany was diverse. We have already noted the devastating impact of Bismarck's success on many liberals; no wonder Mommsen charged that Bismarck had broken the moral backbone of the nation and Nietzsche thundered that military victory must not be confused with cultural vitality. After 1871, a small part of the academic class remained critical of imperial Germany even in the face of success and still hoped that Germany would adopt the political institutions of the West. A larger group retired to what came to be called the unpolitical realm, reconciled to their political impotence. A still larger group idealized the existing Germany and its imperialist ambitions and avowed that German culture, superior to that of the West, justified German power as well. Underlying all three positions, blunting the drive of the first and intensifying the jingoism of the last, was the cultured person's fear of the rapidly growing proletariat and his suspicion that culture and democracy, if not incompatible, were certainly opposed to each other. Without surrendering his unpolitical pretensions, the cultured German could, for the sake of his culture, support every conservative measure and oppose every radical move. *Bildung* became as much a conservative bulwark as *Besitz*, and both began to accept the refeudalization of German society. Years later, Friedrich Meinecke, himself an outstanding representative of the intellectual splendor and political fatality of German Idealism, summed up with unmistakable sympathy this fear of the good but unpolitical German:



Frederick William III of Prussia (1770–1840). "The State must replace by spiritual forces what it lost in material strength." (*Bettmann Archive.*)

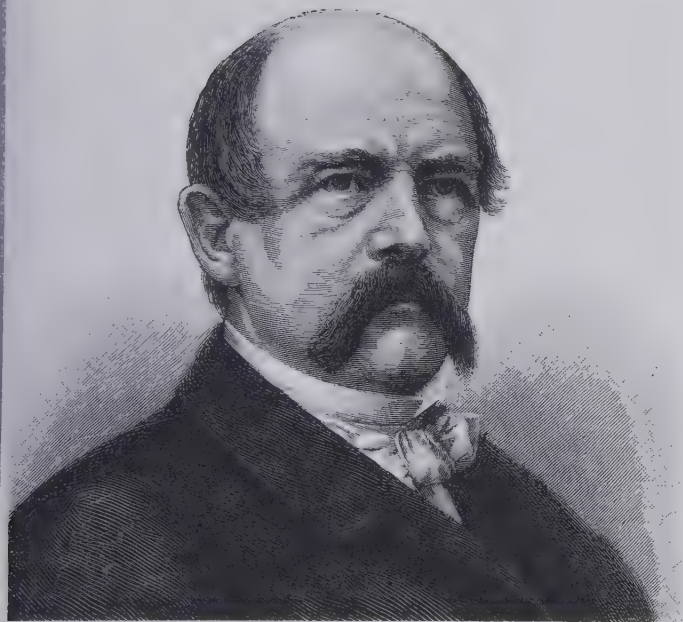


Friedrich Ernst Daniel Schleiermacher (1768–1834). (*Bettmann Archive.*)

About the middle of the nineteenth century and later it was the high aim of German culture to preserve from this pressure [by the masses] and from its coarsening and deteriorating effect the sacred heritage of the Goethe period—an almost miraculous gift bestowed upon the German people—and at the same time to support what seemed vital and fruitful in the demands of the new masses. •

Certainly the preservation of culture and quality in the face of this coarsening intrusion—which since the 1870's the Germans have chosen to call the threat of Americanization—should engage our sympathetic interest. Critics in the West have argued a similar concern. Still, we must

• It is curious that intellectuals, and by no means only German intellectuals, often exaggerate the precariousness of intellectual life and of human creativity, protesting that it is doomed to extinction because of the rising masses, because of affluence or poverty, philistinism or creeping conformity. Is the intellectual enterprise really so feeble and intellect so vulnerable or corruptible?



Otto von Bismarck (1815–1898) in 1868. (*N.Y. Public Library.*)

note that Germany's concern with culture became more and more inimical to the course of German politics itself and soon turned into strong resentment against the West.

At their best the prewar generation of German academics and professionals preserved and enriched the magnificent traditions of German learning. Although no longer the universalists of the early century, they had become erudite specialists, and the creativity of German as well as European thought in the prewar years attested the renewed vigor of that culture. Politically these men had become reluctant adherents of the Empire, often hoping that social reforms would resolve the prevailing antagonisms. The young Weber once likened the Germany of William II to an express train that was roaring ahead without an engineer; the image is apt. Proud of the progress and modernity of Germany, the academic elite of Germany was alarmed

at its political ineptitude and troubled by a premonition of national disaster.

Some of them, unwittingly, hastened the coming of this disaster, for they became exuberant imperialists, justifying Germany's headlong rush into world politics by a kind of cultural Darwinism. Once more, brute force was gilded by idealistic invocations, by reference to Hegel and Fichte and the German Idealist tradition. Similar rationalizations had been propagated in Western countries; the difference, as Ludwig Dehio points out, was that the ideals of the Western powers, of Spain during the Counter-Reformation, of revolutionary France or liberal England, possessed a universal appeal, whereas the "German mission" was parochial and unpersuasive. The Germans were searching for the identity of their mission, in a sense for their own identity; the Kaiser's theatrics were a pathetic instance of this search. To many Germans, with their honest confusion of culture and religion, a superior culture was as much a legitimate reason for ruling others as the Christian missionary impulse had once been. Goethe, after all, was almost as good as god—just as pushpin was always inferior to poetry. The German intelligentsia came to believe that the moral justification of expansion was a guarantee of political success as well, and thus revealed anew the dangers of the unpolitical mind.

The educated bourgeoisie still indulged in the incantations of culture and personality; but material conditions had changed, and these incantations became more and more spurious and less and less disinterested. To pretend to be unpolitical at a time of violent social change and unrest is in itself a support of the existing order. Between 1871 and 1918 a new type of idealism prevailed, one that, because of its wider diffusion and subsequent debasement as well as in recognition of its remoteness and specious descent from the earlier Idealism, I would like to call *Vulgäridealismus*.•

These ideals were still propagated in the schools, and many

• I am, of course, patterning the phrase after the common German terms "*Vulgärmarxismus*" and "*Vulgärliberalismus*."

more Germans were now receiving higher education. Already in 1872, Nietzsche warned that the quality of humanistic education was put in jeopardy by the steady increase in the number of students—a concern not unknown to us. Nietzsche diagnosed the debasing of these ideals as well. It was he who arraigned the culture philistine, that passive consumer of culture who lacked all energy or independence. Still, the pious elevation and conspicuous consumption of culture persisted, attesting sometimes an innocent delight in spirit, frequently representing a claim to an exclusive proprietorship of culture. To carry one's learning lightly is an English phrase that has no German equivalent. The compulsory citation with which all public talks had to begin and end, the indispensable invocation of Goethe and Schiller, became the aesthetic paternoster of the German intelligentsia.

But why not leave the Germans to their pleasing and by no means unique admiration of culture? The answer must be that this Idealism became more and more of a political force, it became in fact the rhetoric with which the unpolitical German denounced the mass society, democracy, liberalism, modernity, indeed all the so-called importations from the West. Treitschke was perhaps the most popular representative of this strain of *Vulgäridealismus*. In the name of Germany's superior national culture he denounced English materialism and utilitarianism, Jewish corruption, Socialist greed, and also the Germans themselves. He attacked universal suffrage because, "our Idealism has always been our strongest national asset; thus it is absolutely un-German to let stupidity and ignorance have the decisive voice." In this way the narrowest class interests could be ennobled and the most aggressive passions cloaked in the rhetoric of Idealism. Men of less bellicose inclinations than Treitschke's appealed to Germany's idealist tradition in order to denounce the forces of modernity and of the West. The deference to culture often bred a condescension for those who had been denied this aristocratic-aesthetic dispensation. Implicit in this attitude was a

Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859) as a young man. Painting by Weitsch. (*Bettmann Archive.*)



disdain for the culturally unpropertied and untitled, and *Vulgäridealismus* could also be defined as a learned attempt at a metaphysics of snobbery.*

This vulgar idealism widened and sanctified the social divisions within Germany, yet thought itself unpolitical. It had no concern with practical matters and considered itself dogmatically opposed to realism, pragmatism, and above all to materialism. It is ironic that the German bourgeoisie often hid its massive materialism behind this idealism, while the Socialists hid their passionate idealism behind a façade of scientific materialism. From their Olympian heights, high above the baser struggles, these idealists marshalled the forces of culture against anarchy, in the effort to defend the status quo against the presumption of the lower classes. It is these idealists that recall a remark that President Lowell of Harvard is said to have made: "I don't mind idealists; it is the unprincipled idealist that I find bad."

The tradition of idealism reached a tragic culmination in 1914, when at the beginning of Germany's most exacting collective effort, the unpolitical character of its people was glorified and institutionalized. The great exaltation of 1914 has been wrongly interpreted as proving Germany's militarism or chauvinism; actually it was the response of a nation that had for decades searched for "the moral equivalent to war" and now had found in war the equivalent of morality. The heroism and the national unity it had sought for so long had at last been attained. In August 1914 the Germans rejoiced, as they were released from the tensions of the armed peace at home and abroad. With joy they adjourned all politics for the duration; the enfeebled political regime, never so much in need of strengthening, was virtually dismantled, and in 1916 was altogether superseded by the disastrous dictatorship of Ludendorff and Hindenburg. Year by year the cost of this unpolitical rule became heavier, and her final defeat was in no small

*For a satire of the Central European *Vulgäridealist* in the United States, see Jacques Barzun's description of Dr. Schlagobers, the "professional European." (*God's Country and Mine*, Ch. 2.)

measure brought about by the selfish ineptitude of Germany's nonpolitical rulers.

It was during the war that the idealistic tradition was everywhere proclaimed as Germany's superior surrogate for politics. It became a self-conscious doctrine, and writers like Thomas Mann, Weber, Sombart, Troeltsch, and many other of the great German savants, pulled together the various strands of the idealism I have been describing. Immeasurably angered by the West's moralistic invocation of the universal ideals of freedom, and its slogans about Huns and barbarians, the German intellectuals hurled

Thomas Mann (1875–1955). (*Bettmann Archive*.)



back a mighty declaration of cultural independence. With the wrath of a Fichte they proclaimed that the German ideals of culture and personality were far more elevated than the selfish, humdrum ideals and institutions of the West. Under provocation, and be it added, often under galling provocation, the German intellectuals developed the anti-Western implications of Idealism to a high pitch. •

A few examples of this wartime literature will suffice, important only because even in its exaggeration it was representative of German thought. Ernst Troeltsch, that superb and sensitive historian of the social teachings of the Christian Churches, penned a restrained and moderate disputation against the West's claims that it was fighting for the universal ideals of progressive humanity. In his essay on the spirit of German culture, this unpolitical strain that I have sought to discuss reaches its clearest expression. Troeltsch seeks to examine "the true cultural antagonisms" between Germany and the West, antagonisms that conditioned the political differences as well. After dissecting British and French cultures, pointing to the materialism of the one and the purely formal democracy of the other, Troeltsch defined "German freedom which will never be

• During the Second World War, when the realities of German atrocities far exceeded the worst fantasies of Allied propaganda during the First World War, the anti-German propaganda was far more subdued. Still, there were regrettable exceptions.

Not a spirited eccentric like Mr. A. J. P. Taylor, but the very sober historian, Sir Llewelyn Woodward, wrote in 1942: "The Teutonic tribes had the standards of other barbarians; they were neither 'better' nor 'worse' than other human beings in this particular cultural stage. Their descendants in Germany have kept barbarian standards of value longer than their descendants in other areas of western Europe. . . . At a time when other countries were slowly outgrowing the 'barbarian' stage, Germany was the only state in western Europe in which, at the beginning of the twentieth century, there had been for two generations something like a large-scale retrogression in social and political standards of value. . . ." (*Short Journey*, pp. 230-1.) This seems rather an absurd interpretation of a people that before 1914 was tiresomely law-abiding, docile, and very much repressed. Before the first war, violence in German society was largely verbal—as witness the personal and political polemics, and perhaps the humor as well. Repression, social and sexual, is an important, obvious, but nevertheless neglected factor in pre-1914 society—as it was in the flamboyant rebellion against it in the 1920's.



Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814). (*Bettmann Archive.*)

purely political, but always linked with the idealistic concept of duty and the romantic concept of the individual." The spiritual-metaphysical essence of the Germans, diffused, as Troeltsch points out, through the educational system, inhibited the establishment of formal Western institutions. Because of the belief in personality "we Germans are above all a monarchical people." The social divisions of modern Germany needed an independent monarchy as a disinterested arbiter among the competing material interests: "No parliamentary majority can achieve that." The absence of a parliamentary regime "does not in the least impair personal freedom or human dignity . . . in many ways we feel freer and more independent than the citizens of the great democracy." By its thoughtful tone Troeltsch's essay stands out amidst the poisoned literature of the war. By that very token it deserves to be taken seriously, as a manifestation of something deeper than an ephemeral patriotic outburst.

Other writers worked the same theme, more extravagantly and more crudely. Thomas Mann's *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* must rank as the most painful elaboration of the equation of Germany with Idealism and of the German with the unpolitical. "The difference between spirit and politics subsumes the difference between culture and civilization, between soul and society, freedom and suffrage, art and literature; and culture, soul, freedom, art—that is Germanism [*Deutschtum*], and not civilization, society, suffrage, and literature." Mann concluded by accepting not only the existing monarchy but also the authoritarian state in any form, the *Obrigkeitsstaat*, which alone fits the German character. Here the reconciliation of freedom and authority had reached its most unpolitical, its most ethereal form, and a wartime utterance of Meinecke explained how this reconciliation was attained: "By cleansing the idea of the nation of everything political and infusing it instead with all the spiritual achievements that have been won, the national idea was raised to the sphere of religion and the eternal."

The rest is an epilogue in disaster. Many of the men who had proclaimed Germany's imperviousness to politics fathered the Weimar Constitution. Weber helped to draft it—it was he who sought to make the presidency a strong office, because the Germans, he thought, needed a strong authority. With others, Weber founded the Democratic Party, the only nonproletarian group that unreservedly supported Weimar, and the only party that lost in each election; it had begun in 1919 with 18 per cent of the vote, and ended in 1933 with .8 per cent. Despite Weber, Troeltsch, Rathenau, despite Meinecke's brave, if thoroughly unpassionate rallying to the Republic, and despite Thomas Mann's belated recognition of the moral necessity of politics and the virtue of the Republic, the educated classes of Germany remained aloof from the Republic,

Nineteenth-century German family scene. Woodcut by Ludwig Richter.
(*Bettmann Archive.*)



seeing in it a shabby, shaky substitute for the imperial regime.*

What was the alternative for the university professors, the teachers, the clerics, and civil servants?•• Many retreated once more to an unpolitical idealism, not as in previous generations to gild the existing regime by a transcendental ideal, but to condemn the existing Republic in the name of an unattainable, mystical ideal. In fact, the simple repudiation of the present was considered idealistic. The educated German went his way, unpolitical, usually utterly contemptuous of the Republic. That attitude itself was inimical to the survival of the Republic.

But a still greater fatality befell this unpolitical German. How was he to respond to the idealism of the nationalist assassins and the Hitler movement, groups clearly in rebellion against reality? In a very real sense, the Hitler movement was idealistic, and that was the condition of its success. Did it not inveigh against materialism and selfishness, defy reality, promise the end of fratricidal conflict and the establishment of social harmony, of unity and leadership, power and confidence? To make it appear that his party's nihilism was really idealism, its resentful and cowardly brutality virile strength—that was Hitler's great propagandistic success. The unpolitical, the

* The uneasy antagonism to the West remained as well. In 1925, in his well-known biography of Luther, Gerhard Ritter wrote: "In recent years it has been much disputed whether Luther belonged to the Middle Ages or 'the modern world.' To me the far more important question seems to be whether we ourselves belong to the modern world—or want to belong to it—if by that term one means primarily the spirit of Anglo-Saxon and Romance culture." (*Luther*, 1925, p. 154.)

•• As one illustration of the antirepublican mood, consider Meinecke's attempt, in 1926, together with some colleagues, to organize a few university professors who would be willing to accept the Constitution, either because they thought the Republic an unfortunate necessity or because they were republicans by persuasion. Meinecke explained his intention: "What a misfortune that for our students the present political order is poisoned—not always directly, for few people dare more than an occasional malicious interjection—but indirectly through the whole political attitude of their teachers." He disavowed the founding of a republican group: "For we would only form a rigidly contained minority group that would be rendered ineffectual by all the means of social boycott." (*Die deutschen Universitäten und der heutige Staat*, Tübingen, 1926.)

educated German hesitated. It was not the few men of culture that joined the party before 1933 that promoted Hitler's success, but the many that failed to oppose him, failed not out of fear, but out of uncertainty lest this be the untamed Caesar, the real Germanic savior. His anti-Western tirades, his anti-Semitism, uncouth though they were, stirred memories of earlier, more genteel forms of idealistic anti-Semitism. And the way the Jews were mocking culture, were composing cheap three-penny operas, was really intolerable, the *Bürger* thought. If the educated classes floundered, how much more readily would the economically aggrieved, socially disinherited, flock to the Hitler movement. The idealistic appeal of the Nazis must be reckoned with. Dehio was right when he wrote of them and their immediate predecessors: "Idealism was linked to crime, and the nihilistic will to power prepared itself, quite without conscience, to annihilate Occidental ethics."

Even after 1933, many educated Germans were blind to this criminality of the Nazis. So constantly had they depreciated politics that the absence of a free political society troubled them little, if at all. A few were incarcerated, some emigrated, some joined the movement, many retired to the unpolitical sphere; it is no accident that after 1945 the educated Germans argued that their highest achievement had been an "inner emigration," a retirement within the self. A handful of heroes rebounded from this inner emigration and, in a final gasp of genuine idealism, risked their lives in the revolt of the 20th of July. It, too, failed, and the savage vengeance that Hitler visited upon the plotters expressed his hatred for the educated, aristocratic Germans.

• A German newspaper recently provided an unintentionally amusing illustration. When Hjalmar Schacht was forced out of the presidency of the Reichsbank in 1939, a few unpolitical bureaucrats tried to forestall the appointment of a Nazi, and hence sought to prevail on a young conservative colleague, Karl Blessing, to seek the job. His reply: "Dear friend, When I shave in the morning I have to look at myself in the mirror, and I have to be able to say: 'Blessing, you are a decent chap.' But under this regime, the currency cannot be protected, and hence I would not be a decent fellow if I took the post of president." (*Die Zeit*, January 2, 1958.) At present, Blessing is president of the Bundesbank of the Federal Republic.

In 1946, when all seemed irretrievably lost to the Germans, Meinecke wrote one last summary of German history, concluding with an invocation to the German spirit. His final counsel was:

In every German city and larger village, therefore, we should like to see in the future a community of likeminded friends of culture which I should like best to call Goethe Communities. . . . The whole idea must start with individuals, with personalities, the special few who first build among themselves only one such Goethe community, and then let it develop, here in one form, there in another.

After their disastrous failure, the Germans were to read Goethe to each other! Was Goethe once more to become the acknowledged legislator of the Germans, was Germany's great tradition once more invoked for a purpose that it could not and was not intended to serve? The provisional answer over the last decade would seem to be no.

A German university classroom in the first half of the nineteenth century (Jacob Grimm and his students). (*Bettmann Archive.*)



The vague idealism of the unpolitical German seems not to have survived Hitler's excesses, and there appears in progress a gradual *embourgeoisement* of West German culture, a willingness to be pragmatic, realistic, prosperous. What so many Germans for so long dreaded and denounced—the Americanization of German culture—seems now to be taking place, quietly and fitfully, but to the apparent pleasure of the Germans and to the likely benefit of their still untested democratic regime.

Interview: Richard Hofstadter•

As an historian, Richard Hofstadter eludes easy classification. "Don't call me as a social historian," he told a recent visitor to his office. "Call me a political historian mainly interested in the role of ideas in politics, an historian of political culture rather than of parties or institutions. Sometimes I escape that pigeonhole. My work on academic freedom hardly fits it, nor possibly the book I'm involved in now. It's tentatively titled 'Anti-Intellectualism in American Life,' and it's partly an essay on the intellectual situation of the last ten years, partly a sketch of our intellectual history up to that time. But the thing I'm most ambitious to get on with is the development of American democratic ideas and practices from 1800 to about 1830. This is what I want to devote most of my time to from now on."

Mr. Hofstadter, who is forty-four and a professor of history at Columbia University, has moved swiftly since his doctoral dissertation, *Social Darwinism in American Thought*, was published in 1944. Since then he has, among other things, written or shared in the writing of six other books,

• The first of a series of informal talks with well-known historians conducted by David Hawke of Pace College.

one of them a successful two-volume college text and another, *The Age of Reform*, the winner of a Pulitzer prize. "I do not think a twelve-hour day is unfair to expect of an intellectual," he told his visitor. "I'm not nostalgic for the good old days, but one redeeming thing about the Depression generation, which I represent, is that the rewards were so meager, the job problem so desperate, that we expected as a matter of course to work hard."

The Depression, Mr. Hofstadter made clear, affected other aspects of his work. "What started me off as an historian was a sense of engagement with contemporary problems. As one who matured in the 1930's, my interest has centered mainly on politics. The events of those years no doubt also influenced my views on the past. I know it is risky, but I still write history out of my engagement with the present. Karl Mannheim once summed up the risks and gains of this approach—'that our social thinking is determined by our social position is not necessarily a source of error. On the contrary, it is often the path to political insight.' Of course, using the present to look at the past often is abused. It all depends on how you do it. What counts is that the sense of engagement with current issues is used legitimately to re-understand the past. I know there are traps. That is one reason I try to avoid a dogmatic stand in my work."

Mr. Hofstadter paused, apparently to order his thoughts, then, searching for the words he wanted, as though he were writing rather than chatting from his desk chair, he said: "One of the feelings I have about my work is a certain tentativeness. People take you in absolutely dead earnest, as though the ideas you advance are your final thoughts on the subject. In the Introduction to *The Age of Reform*"—Mr. Hofstadter swung round in his chair to the bookshelves behind as he talked and pulled off a volume—"I said: ' . . . I hope that my observations will be taken as a prelude and a spur to further studies of American reform movements and not as an attempt to render a final judgment.' Could anything be plainer? Sometimes I wonder if readers bother with introductions any more."

These "tentative" judgments, he went on, come to a head slowly. "The first draft of *The Age of Reform* was written during the academic year of '51-52. The Walgreen Lectures I gave in Chicago that year were based on that draft. The book then went through several revisions. Eventually I had the chapters mimeographed and asked for comments from friends. One more rewriting followed. Finally, in 1955, three years after the first draft was completed, the book came out.

"What do I mean by revision? The lectures at Chicago were my first thoughts on the subject. After giving them, I did a great deal of additional reading, then a complete reorganization and rewriting of every chapter. I write at

Richard Hofstadter. (*Columbia University.*)



least three drafts of anything. My first draft tends to be half literate. I don't know what a natural writer is, but I don't think I am one. My stuff comes out very crabbed. The older I get, the more time I like to see elapse between the first draft and the last. I have a lot of second thoughts, and I'd rather have them before the book is bound. I'll fight right down to the galleys and sometimes even after the book is in print. Here, let me show you something."

Mr. Hofstadter stepped over to another shelf and picked up two volumes. "Let me show you the difference between the original and paperback editions of *Social Darwinism*. Five years ago the chance came to bring it out in paper. We made—I say 'we' because I get a tremendous amount of editorial criticism from my wife—some seven or eight hundred changes, nearly all of them purely stylistic."

The visitor glanced at the original edition, and reading at random noticed these lines on the opening page of Chapter Four:

Like many other youths who reached their maturity in the early sixties, Ward flavored his educational diet with liberal doses of Spencer, and absorbed Spencer's version of universal evolution. The monistic dogma came to him as second nature.

The same lines in the revised edition read:

Like many other youths who came of age in the early 1860's, Ward flavored his educational diet with liberal dashes of Spencer, and admired Spencer's version of universal evolution. The monistic dogma seemed axiomatic to him.

"The whole text was completely redone along those lines," Mr. Hofstadter said, glancing over his visitor's shoulder as he read. "I'm much happier with the way the second version reads. I enjoyed the chance to improve the book."

"No," Mr. Hofstadter continued, anticipating a question as he returned to his chair, "I did not make any such changes in *The American Political Tradition* when it was reissued. For one thing, I was more satisfied with the style. Also, I did not have the courage to touch it. It would have been a very difficult book to revise. If I should do another

like it today, every sketch would be different. No, that's not exactly true. I would not drastically change the opening chapter on the Founding Fathers, and I think I am still roughly satisfied with the chapters on Calhoun, Bryan, and Lincoln. All the others would change, though exactly how I'm not sure. I'd probably revise the essay on Teddy Roosevelt considerably. I've written enough about him since to discharge most of my dislike. Besides, I made one major mistake in that essay—I took his professions of progressivism at face value and spent a lot of time showing they were fraudulent. I think that was a waste of time which I would by-pass now. T.R. fascinates me, I respect his political gifts, but I just don't like him. His blubbering nationalism, his real love of violence don't sit well with me.

"I'd also substantially change the essays on Jefferson, Wilson, and F.D.R., and, to a certain extent, the one on Hoover. I think, now that I've seen twelve more years of Hoover, that I was soft with him. The basic theme of the Jefferson chapter wouldn't change, but many other aspects of the man interest me now and would cause me to emphasize points I tended to overlook. My opinion of F.D.R. has gone up as my understanding of what can and cannot be done in the political processes has increased. I have more respect now for the 'broker function' of the politician that F.D.R. represents so well. I'm still not wholly taken with his sense of responsibility, but I have the feeling that a man like Wilson, who lacked Roosevelt's flippancy, would soon have been killed by the burden of the job F.D.R. had."

Mr. Hofstadter paused to pull off his glasses. He twirled them reflectively by a stem for a moment. "I am as much, maybe more, of an essayist than an historian," he went on. "If one were to compare the proportion of time given to expression with that given to research, my emphasis is on the first. I read a good deal of literary criticism, and a lot of the cues I've taken for my own writing come from it. I don't think any historian has deeply influenced my own style. I once read and liked Carl Becker. I haven't reread him for years and don't think as much of his work now. (Perhaps you've seen Peter Gay's essay on *The Heavenly*

City. Quite a devastating critique and one which I think is right.) I suspect that to some degree Parrington influenced me. I don't think much of him now. Certainly I don't aspire to write that way. I think people like Edmund Wilson had much more influence on my style than any historian. And also, oddly enough, H. L. Mencken. No one would dream of imitating him, but he awoke me to the buffoonery and playfulness one can inject into one's style. I soaked up everything of Mencken's when I was an undergraduate at the University of Buffalo."

Mention of Buffalo sent the conversation in a new direction. "I majored in philosophy and history at Buffalo. I think philosophy interested me a bit more, but I was astute enough to see (a) I had no gifts in the field and (b) jobs for philosophers were still harder to come by. And so when I came to graduate school at Columbia—my family wanted me to become a lawyer, but after a short stint in law school they let me go my own way without fuss—I settled in history. And I think, getting back to influences, that the big influence there was my teacher at Buffalo—Julius Pratt. He is a thoroughly professional historian, which I think I'll never be, and a wonderful teacher. He always kept bringing me back to the problems of history and the facts of life. He left the theoretical problems of history to the philosophers and I've tried to do the same.

"Despite my early attachment to philosophy, I'm not especially interested in the theoretical side of history. There was, of course, quite an efflorescence of theoretical work around the turn of the century, a special moment of vitality when able men like Becker and Beard were asking what history is and what it can do. These men were reacting against a misunderstanding—I emphasize misunderstanding—of Ranke and against the 'objective' historians of the late nineteenth century. But I am not sure, now that these men have done their work, that this is a good way to spend one's time. It is much more important, it seems to me, to devise techniques and approaches that will give new insights into both the past and present. The fundamental problems of historical knowledge are problems for philos-

ophers. Most of us historians—and that includes myself—should stick to our lasts. I'm not trying to downgrade the significance of the problems, but I have never been very impressed with the theoretical work of even an outstanding historian like Beard.

"I must say, though, that Beard was really *the* exciting influence on me. He was for me what Turner has been for so many others in my field. Finding flaws in Beard's work became an avocation that I pursued for a time. The first piece I published—in the *American Historical Review* in 1938—took issue with Beard on the importance of the tariff as a causal factor of the Civil War. This was in a sense my first critical act, and I've been somewhat critical of him since. But I don't want to obscure the fact that it was Beard who got me excited about American history. Turner never did. I'm too much of an Easterner.

"Another early critical act of mine, incidentally, dealt with Parrington. In digging into his work on the one particular that interested me—the Physiocrats' influence on Jeffersonians—I found him totally wrong. That helped me get Parrington out of my system. One always has to reckon with the generation that has gone before. I think where one gets one's real intellectual impetus is reacting against ideas one has felt strongly."

Perhaps, the visitor suggested, Mr. Hofstadter would soon be in for the same treatment his generation has been handling Beard and Parrington. Mr. Hofstadter smiled. "As far as my own work is concerned, the time has already come," he said. "There is a long piece in a recent issue of *The Journal of Politics* by Andrew M. Scott that really roasts *The Age of Reform*. Too much of our historical criticism is feeble, even shoddy. Historians err on the side of generosity; there is too much back-patting. I don't agree with Scott's article, but at least it's a critical piece with bite. I'm pleased to see people bite hard into a subject."



Edward Gibbon (1737–1794). Pen drawing by Lady Diana Beauclerk.
(*British Museum.*)

Lives of the Historians, II: The Six-and-a-Half Auto- biographies of Edward Gibbon

Dero A. Saunders

Not until 1894, a century after the death of Edward Gibbon, were historians and the public given access to all the papers of the man who, over some twenty laborious years, wrote the stately *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Some of the material that was then revealed, such as certain letters, was of concern primarily to specialists. Of more general interest, however, were the six separate versions—plus a rudimentary beginning of a seventh—of Gibbon's famous *Autobiography*.

By that time, the "official" version of the autobiography had been in print for almost one hundred years. It was first published by John Holroyd, Lord Sheffield, who was one of Gibbon's closest friends and his literary executor. This official version had long since become a classic, often acclaimed as the best autobiography in the language—concise, revealing of the man, his work, and his times, and frequently eloquent. It had appeared in edition after edition, and made its way into such standard collections as the World's Classics and the Everyman Library. Therefore, it was something of a shock to realize how far this official

version was from being Gibbon's own work in any pure sense.

To be sure, Lord Sheffield, in his preface to the first edition of the autobiography, had discussed the several drafts of which it was composed; and though this preface was often omitted from later routine editions, all of them carried a footnote on page one remarking that the opening paragraph "is found in only one of the six sketches, and in that which seems to have been the first written. . . ." But so smooth was the published version that all save the most critical and informed readers might suppose that Lord Sheffield had done no more than a particularly onerous job of literary tidying up. Further, the great classical scholar Dean H. H. Milman of St. Paul's, who had been allowed to inspect all the versions while he was engaged in preparing his well-known edition of the *Decline and Fall* (1842), reported that "I found not above two or three sentences [omitted from the official autobiography] which I should have wished to rescue from oblivion."

The opening of Gibbon's papers in 1894, however, and the publication, in 1896, of the six-plus versions of the autobiography, made it clear that Lord Sheffield's editing had influenced the official version far more than had been suspected. While it would be intriguing to speculate why Gibbon wrote so many versions of his autobiography (or, indeed, why he chose to write an autobiography at all), the focus of this article shall be on the nature and impact of Lord Sheffield's editing, which is still very much to the point today. For, in keeping with the sociologist's maxim that error is often as persistent as truth, the revelations of 1894 have not prevented the official version from continuing to be published in unchanged form down to the present day.

To understand Lord Sheffield's editing of the autobiography requires a description of the several versions of which it was composed; and this in turn demands a thumbnail biography of the historian. Edward Gibbon was born in 1737, the son of a well-to-do but impractical Surrey landowner. Young Gibbon was a sickly child (the only

survivor among seven), whose frequent illnesses made his early schooling most desultory. Both before and after his mother's death, which occurred when he was ten years old, he was raised largely by a maternal aunt, Catherine Porten, who encouraged his early propensity toward reading and historical study.

In April 1752, before Gibbon was fifteen, his father entered him at Oxford, where he spent fourteen months ("the most idle and unprofitable of my whole life") and became a convert to Roman Catholicism—an offense then regarded as tantamount to high treason. He was bundled off to Lausanne in June 1753 in the care of M. Pavilliard, a Swiss Calvinist minister, who not only gradually reclaimed him from Catholicism but also launched him upon the classical studies which led to the *Decline and Fall*.

Returning home in May 1758, he divided his next two years between London and his father's new home in Hampshire; published anonymously his first work, the French-language *Essai sur l'étude de la littérature*; served two-and-a-half years (May 1760–December 1762) with his father in Pitt's militia; and then spent another two-and-a-half years on a European grand tour, including, of course, Italy and Rome. The period from his return in June 1765 until his father's death (November 1770) was spent in study and several minor publications; and two years more were required before he could disentangle his father's estate sufficiently to move to London in October 1772.

During the succeeding and most productive years of his life, Gibbon published the first half of the *Decline and Fall* (volume I in 1776, volumes II and III in 1781), sat in Parliament from two districts, and enjoyed for three years the sinecure of a seat on the Board of Trade. Its loss in a political overturn, plus financial pressures resulting from complications in his father's estate, led him in 1783 to retire to Lausanne. There, sharing a house with his Swiss friend Georges Deyverdun, he completed the last three volumes of the *Decline and Fall* (published May 1788). In June 1793, in order to comfort Lord Sheffield

History

My life

Part I

Introduction -- Account of my family --
My grandfather -- my father -- my
birth in the year 1797 -- my infancy --
my first education and studies

In the fifty second year
year of my age after the completion of a
humble and ~~late~~ successful work, I now
propose to employ some moments of my leisure
in reviewing the events simple transactions of
of a private and lettered life. Truth, naked
unblushing truth, the first virtue of more
serious history must be the sole recommendation
of this personal narrative: the style shall
be simple and familiar: but style is the image
of character, and the habits of correct writing may
produce without labor or length the appearance
of art and study. My own amusement is the

over the death of his wife, Gibbon journeyed back to England, where he died in January of the following year.

As for the sketches or versions of the autobiography, the "half-version" may be disposed of at once by describing it as a rudimentary introduction of less than three printed pages, consisting of a discussion of the appeal which has always attached to the study of one's own forebears. It provided no more than two or three paragraphs for the official autobiography.

The remaining versions, which require more carefully scrutiny, are as follows:

Version A, the earliest, was apparently begun in 1788 (the same year Gibbon published the last three volumes of the *Decline and Fall*) and completed—so far as it went—the following year. Consisting of only thirty-three printed pages, with five manuscript pages missing, it nonetheless covers in some detail the early history of the Gibbon family down to the time of Gibbon's father, and contains a fairly full account of the relationship between Gibbon's paternal aunts and the interesting English religious reformer William Law.

Version B, one hundred and ten pages long and written in 1789 and perhaps early 1790, covers the family history and Gibbon's childhood rather sketchily, but is much fuller with respect to the period from his banishment to Lausanne (June 1753) to the eve of his trip to Italy in April 1764, at which point this version ends.

Version C, written about 1789 and comprising eighty-two printed pages, covers a broader span than Version B—until shortly after the death of Gibbon's father in November 1770—and is correspondingly sketchier in its detail.

Version D, written about 1790–1, is but twenty-five pages long, but relates the events of his life in such compressed fashion that it, too, ends with his father's death in 1770.

Version E, fifty-seven pages written in 1790 and early

1791, has the widest span of any of the versions—to 1791—and is the only one covering the adult years when Gibbon was sitting in Parliament, writing the *Decline and Fall*, etc.

Version F, written in 1792–3, is the last written, most detailed, and most perfect of all the versions, as though it were intended to be the final product if Gibbon had been able to complete it. However, its ninety-five pages cover only the first seventeen years of his life, down to his departure from Oxford in June 1753.

Faced with the problem of putting together one complete book from this abundance of imperfect materials, Lord Sheffield chose the sensible practice of following, in general, that version which gave the fullest and most polished account of any particular part of Gibbon's life. Thus, if we discount an opening pirouette of some four pages concocted from Version A and the "half-version" mentioned above, the first third of the official autobiography follows Version F to its end—that is, through Gibbon's Oxford days. The next third, from Gibbon's Lausanne exile to the start of his Italian journey, generally follows Version B, already characterized above as throwing most light on this period. Then, after some twenty pages of Version C (from Gibbon's Italian journey to his father's death), the remainder of the autobiography is necessarily drawn from Version E, as the only one which covers this major part of Gibbon's adult life.

However, as an editor Lord Sheffield possessed much more than a firm grasp of the inherent limitations of his materials. He also had a fine sense of style; and, while employing the master plan just described, he kept an eye peeled for well-stated paragraphs, sentences, or even phrases which might be inserted or substituted in the version he happened to be following.

For example, at the point where Gibbon (after some twenty pages of family history) first alludes to his own birth, there follows the felicitous measure: "My lot might

have been that of a slave, a savage, or a peasant; nor can I reflect without pleasure on the bounty of nature, which cast my birth in a free and civilized country, in an age of science and philosophy, in a family of honorable rank, and decently endowed with the gifts of fortune." This passage does not appear in Version F, which is here carrying the burden of the tale, but was lifted bodily from Version B and inserted at the appropriate point.

Again, in describing his childhood studies, Gibbon writes: "Before I left Kingston school I was well acquainted with Pope's Homer and the *Arabian Nights Entertainment*, two books which will always please by the moving picture of human manners and specious miracles; *nor was I then capable of discerning that Pope's translation is a portrait endowed with every merit excepting that of likeness to the original.*" The waspish conclusion of the sentence (which is not italicized in the autobiography) was added from an earlier version.

In addition to reinforcing, by deft additions, whatever version he happened to be following, Lord Sheffield also at times discarded one description of a given event for another that he regarded as more aptly phrased. For example, the entire account of Gibbon's Italian journey is taken from Version C, except for the single famous sentence in which Gibbon describes when and where he first resolved to write the *Decline and Fall*. Here is the sentence as it appeared in Version C:

In my journal the place and moment of conception are recorded: the fifteenth of October, 1764, in the close of evening, as I sat musing in the church of the Zoccolanti, or Franciscan friars, while they were singing vespers in the Temple of Jupiter on the ruins of the Capitol.

Here, instead, is the sentence that Lord Sheffield preferred, from Version E:

It was at Rome, on the fifteenth of October, 1764, as I sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, while the barefooted friars were singing vespers in the Temple of Jupiter, that the idea of writing the decline and fall of the city first started to my mind.

1753 June - 1754 December

1. Journey to L. - Eliot. - Chesterfield
2. First aspect horrid - house, slavery, ignorance
3. Benefits - separation, language. health ^{exile}
study - exercises.
4. Pavillard character. use - lectures - conversation
Trench and Laten - double translations - Log
5. Return to the Protestant Church.

1755. Jan - December.

6. Mental puberty - voluntary study - habits.
Acero - my gratitude to him and Xenophon
7. Greek grammar and Testament
8. Rational reading - common place -
9. Tour of Switzerland.

1756. Jan. - 1758. April.

10. My series of Latin Classics - criticisms, Greek fragment.
11. Mathematics - Metaphysics - Ethics public and private.
12. Correspondence, with Bretinger Allamand &c
13. Taste and compositions - seeds of the Essay -
14. Love. 15. Friendship and society.
16. Voltaire Theatre - 17. The World. 18. Recall and Esteem

A single reading of the two alternatives is enough to convince that Lord Sheffield made the correct choice, preferring the latter's lively imagery and stately order—which are, after all, Gibbon's literary trademarks—to the fussy detail and awkward construction of the first. Indeed, I have been unable to find a single instance where Lord Sheffield's additions and substitutions failed to improve the autobiography as finally published.

But, alas! The editor's job involves deletions as well as additions and substitutions; and here Lord Sheffield managed to squander most if not all the credit he had amassed through his already acknowledged editing skills. For, in what we would regard today as a misguided effort to be kind to his old friend, throughout the autobiography he changed or deleted phrases and omitted whole sentences, paragraphs, and even pages. And by omission I do not mean technical omission of, say, a paragraph from Version B at a point where the tale is being carried by Version F: I mean the omission of significant sections of whatever version is being followed.

So numerous are the omissions that it is impossible in an article such as this even to categorize them completely. However, they include part or all of Gibbon's descriptions of his grandfather, who amassed the family wealth; his discussion of the relationship between his family and William Law; his critical comments on his parents; the story of his father's financial incapacity, and his raid upon Gibbon's inheritance; his caustic remarks on certain aspects of religion; his telling of certain mild amorous adventures in Paris; his bumptious revelations of conceit; and a host of miscellaneous characterizations, descriptions, and anecdotes which Lord Sheffield apparently regarded as being in poor taste, too revealing of living persons, or simply nobody else's business.

The only effective way to go about repairing the damage done by Lord Sheffield's omissions is to prepare a new and expanded edition of the autobiography, a task which I have

recently completed. However, a few samples of omitted passages will give readers of the official autobiography some taste of what they have missed.

For example, Lord Sheffield plucked out this acute and feeling description of Gibbon's father:

The world was open before him. His spirit was lively, his appearance splendid, his aspect cheerful, his address polite. He gracefully moved in the highest circles of society, and I have heard him boast that he was the only member of the opposition admitted into the old club at White's, where the first names of the country were often rejected. Yet such was the charming flexibility of his temper that he could accomodate himself with ease and almost with indifference to every class, to a meeting of lords or farmers, of citizens or foxhunters; and without being admired as a wit, Mr. Gibbon was everywhere beloved as a companion and esteemed as a man.

But in the pursuit of pleasure his happiness, alas, and his fortune were gradually injured. Economy was superseded by fashion; his income proved inadequate to his expense; his house at Putney, in the neighborhood of London, acquired the dangerous fame of hospitable entertainment. Against the more dangerous temptation of play he was not invulnerable, and large sums were silently precipitated into that bottomless pit. Few minds have sufficient resources to support the weight of idleness; and had he continued to walk in the path of mercantile industry, my father would have been a happier and his son would have been a richer man.

Nor did Lord Sheffield hesitate to delete highly quotable and even epigrammatic passages, such as this description of primary education in Gibbon's day:

Few men, in the trials of life, have experienced a more painful sensation than the poor schoolboy with an imperfect task, who trembles on the eve of the black Monday. A school is a cavern of fear and sorrow. The mobility of captive youths is chained to a book and a desk; an inflexible master commands their attention, which every moment is impatient to escape. They labor, like the soldiers of Persia, under the scourge, and their education is nearly finished before they can apprehend the sense or utility of the hard lessons they are forced to repeat.

Or, again, consider this pronouncement on the subject of authors' wealth and poverty:

Few works of merit and importance have been executed either in a garret or a palace. A gentleman possessed of leisure and independence,

of books and talents, may be encouraged to write by the distant prospect of honor and reward; but wretched is the author, and wretched will be the work, where daily diligence is stimulated by daily hunger.

The length of the deletions just quoted—and they are by no means the longest—should not imply that Lord Sheffield shrank from shorter ones. Thus, when Gibbon wrote that he conducted certain studies “with skill and discretion,” the words “skill and” were deleted; where Gibbon wrote that the “spectacle of Venice afforded some hours of astonishment and some days of disgust,” out went the last five words; a printer described as “my timid friend Mr. Elmsley” became simply “my friend Mr. Elmsley”; the phrase “the French disease,” used to describe the French Revolution, was altered to “Gallic frenzy”; and where Gibbon described his mental faculties as improved by “labor and manure,” Lord Sheffield substituted “cultivation.” Lord Sheffield even deleted—nearly twenty years after Voltaire’s death—two sentences describing his jealous attempts to sabotage the performance of a play by Racine.

There is no denying the enormous debt we owe Lord Sheffield. By sound organization and judicious inclusions, he created from scrappy materials one of the best works of its type in the language. Yet it is equally plain that his solicitousness for Gibbon’s reputation, and his attentiveness to the niceties of the age, led him to blur seriously the character of his friend. To this extent the editing of the autobiography deserves the charge made against it by one of Gibbon’s recent biographers (Michael Joyce), who found it “loose, even unscrupulous by modern standards.”

As for Dean Milman, who found “not above two or three sentences” worth preserving in the unpublished portions of the autobiography, one can only weep for his judgment or pray for his intentions.

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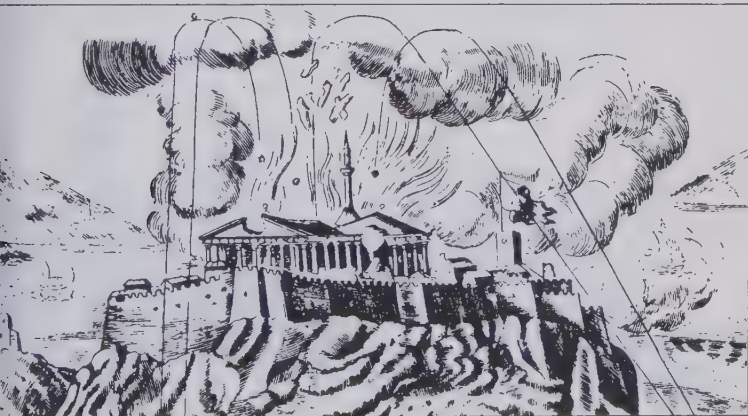


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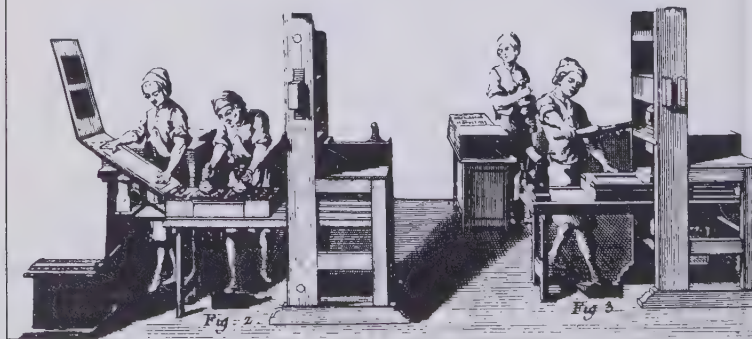
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